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Chapter I

ANALYSIS OF ETHNOGRAPHICAL DATA

The social organization of the Akan peoples consists of two major kinds of institutions, of which intersect at numerous points. The first of these consists of institutions connected with the system of kinship relations, the second consists of institutions founded on territorial and military ties. However, it is obvious that kinship ties exert a significant influence on the settlement structures at various levels, so we shall first analyse the institutions concerning kinship. Kinship organizations are older than territorial ones, and tradition as well as relics indicate that the Akan migrations on the Gold Coast took place in clan structures (for instance the use of the term 'asasewura' - literally 'the masters of the land', meaning the clan of the first settlers). However we should be wary of rash conclusions about the ancient origin of these organizations. It should also be noted that due to their exogamic character it was impossible for any single clan to lead a completely separate life.

The Akans are a matrilinear society the kinship organizations are based on matrilinear clans called mmusua (sng. abusua)[1]. The word 'abusua' is a synonym of the word 'mogya', meaning 'blood' which according to the Akans is passed on in the mother's line. Thus clan membership includes all matrilinear relatives, both alive and dead (samanfo)[2]. Members of the abusua believe that they are descended from one ancestor (or, more precisely, ancestress), who is closely connected with a totem, or even identified with it. The totem is known as 'nana', and the word is used in addressing ancient ancestors. It is surrounded by special

taboos, it is prohibited to kill or eat it, and it should best be avoided[3] The clans possess names, and membership in a clan is commonly believed to be connected with particular physical or mental features characteristic of the totem[4].

The question of the number of clans is still unanswered. The numbers which are most often quoted are seven or eight (this applies to the Ashanti, whose social organization has been most thoroughly investigated). Literature of the subject provides various solutions, the numbers given range from four to over a dozen, and the forms of names are even more numerous. On the basis of a proverb saying that the mmusua are the five children of the mother Akan, Danquah claims that initially there existed only five clans, and the other names indicate their branches[5]. We must also note that among the majority of the Akan peoples we find either similar names, (the differences might arise from a difference in dialect), or different clans having the same totem, as the name of the clan is not identical with the name of the totem. It is easy to imagine the causes of this state of affairs, if we take into account the numerous migrations of various groups of Akans, which were not yet over by the 18th century.

Another reason for the differentiation of names and the increase in the number of clans could have been the existence of twin clans, if indeed this institution functioned. It is recorded by the Ashanti traditions collected by Rattray[6]. According to these records in ancient times existed clans forming pairs with clans existing at present. Intermarriage was exclusively practiced by their members. This custom was to have been prohibited by Okomfo Ankoye, that is at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries, and considered incestuous. The result was that the members of both twin clans were as if members of one abusua, which could have retained one or the other name at two different locations. A similar situation might have taken place among other Akan peoples, where it could have been solved otherwise, for instance by declaring the two twin clans as non-related. Okomfo Aknoye was an authority for the Ashanti (if indeed the connection of his person with the described reform is correct, of which we are not convinced, knowing about the widespread traditional practice of ascribing achievements to eminent persons who in

reality had had no partin them), but he may not have been one for the other AKan peoples.

In theory members of an abusua had the same rights and duties. They were bound to help each other, exchange hospitality, they were collectively responsible for the actions of all the members of the abusua. The land, buildings, agricultural and other tools theoretically belonged to the clan and the members were only users. The main mark of prestige within the abusua was age, that is in traditional terms, close links with the samanfo spirits, the ancestors[7].

In practice, due to the wide dispersal of clans, their local segments played a very important role. Clan leadership existed only at this level, for the AKan clan did not possess a central government.

The leader of the local (village or town) abusua was known as the abusuapanin (panin-elder). He was usually elected from among the eldest members by a convocation of all adult kin, although in practice, as in other cases, the voice of the elders who formed a sort of 'senior pars', was decisive. Designation by the predecessor was also very important in the election. The office of abusuapanin was usually kept for life, although if he did not fulfill his duties, or the members of the abusua were otherwise dissatisfied with him, he could be dismissed[8].

The abusuapanin directed all the activities of the abusua. He alotted land for cultivation, represented the interests of the clan in the counsel of elders of the village, he was the arbiter in all matters connected with inheritance, marriages, births, ransoms and in cases of conflict between members of the abusua. As a representative of the samanfo he organized and played a chief part in festivals, especially Adae, the festival of the ancestors, which took place twice in 43 days (this was the length of the ritual month of the AKan peoples)[9].

Apart from the abusuapanin leadership of the abusua consisted of the counsel of elders and the obaapanin, the clan mother, usually a sister of the clan leader[10].

We must add, however, that in the case of a clan which governed an oman, an early AKan state - like organization, this relatively egalitarian kinship structure was altered by

the distinction from the abusua of a group known as the adenye the lineage of the ruler[11]

The ntoro, soul, was the form of kinship in the male line. However, ntoro was not institutionalized, and it did not have a wider social reference apart from the cult[12]. The number of ntoro was exceptionally large. They were usually connected with water spirits, which held a high position in the supernatural world of the Akans. The memory of ntoro was generally kept up for three or four generations[13]. In the ruling house of the Ashanti, however, the particular ntoro of the rulers had political significance (for instance connected with a peaceful or expansionist policy), and their memory was retained for much longer. This situation however, cannot be considered typical[14].

The yafunu (literally womb), a form of lineage of two or three generations, was a part of the abusua and a unit of the clan, which was directly connected with cultivating the land[15].

The basic economic unit, of which the yafunu was often the nucleus, was the fiefo, the household of the extended family[16]. Membership of the extended family, however, was not clearly defined due to a number of possible forms of marriage, although this was usually patrilocal, and the choice of guardianship over a child, which could involve the father or an uncle[17]. Fortes claims that there existed even fiefo which consisted only of a married couple and their children[18], but his research was carried out in the fourtieth of our century, so the use of the retrogressive method with respect to his findings is inadvisable.

The head of the fiefo was the fiewura, usually the eldest male, sometimes female. His competence corresponded to that of the abusuapanin, but on the fiefo level[19]. We should pay special attention to two basic aspects of the Akans social structure at this level, as they will prove very important further on. The first of these is the mutual interpenetration of kinship and territorial structures which has already been mentioned, the second - the custom of electing theoretically dismissable heads of these structures from the entitled and the fact that these leaders shared their duties with a counsel of elders and a "mother".

The fiefo could not correspond directly to the yafunu, for the

latter was solely a clan structure, while the fiefo consisted of members from other clans as well. This explains the existence of various customs, mostly connected with marriage, which were a form of rites of passage, as well as others which organized everyday life and were meant to even out these differences. In this perspective a whole system of customs which at first glance seems incongruous appears to be entirely purposeful, both for the functioning of kinship structures as well as the whole society. These however, are not the object of our investigations.

The post of the fiewura belonged to the clan, or rather the yafunu, and every holder was usually the brother or nephew of the previous one, another case of matrilinear succession. However, he could be dismissed or even precluded from holding it if his relatives considered him unsuitable[20].

The next institution is the village, akura (pl. nkura). Depending on its shape it could either be a single village, or a number of settlements among which one was the local centre from which the others sprung out[21]. Gouth maintains that the average population of a village was 500 to 1000 inhabitants[22] but these figures do not constitute a general rule and seem to be the upper boundry for most of the nkura. In order to establish whether a given settlement is an akura or not the structure and not size should be considered.

The lay-out of the akura yields the first, extremely important, data, namely that it was divided into areas assigned to clans which inhabited it, usually four or five in number. In the centre there was a space which played the role of a forum, a place of gathering. The land of the akura was also divided among particular clans[23]. Apart from this it is possible that the akura also owned some other land (nkonnuasase), but the role and character of it is uncertain[24]. Aliens inhabited a separate sector known as the zongo, which may indicate that they were, in part at least, arrivals from the north, who were in Akan called zongofo. Their chief occupations were trade and the cultivation of the nkonnuasase land, for which they were obliged to hand over half or one third of the produce to the akura[25]. It is not certain, however, whether the zongofo existed already in the period of our interest, and whether they were Akans or an

ethnically different population. Besides, we must note that the tribute seems exorbitantly high in relation to the effectiveness of traditional farming in the Guinea Bay forest region.

The akura was headed by the odekuro, who was the abusuapanin of the first settlers, known as the asasewura (literally masters of the land). This clan traditionally held a priority in the akura, and the remaining abusua in the village were bound to pay certain tributes to it, although these were usually symbolic in nature.

The counsel of elders, or badwa, consisting of the chiefs of the remaining clans living in the akura, participated in governing the village and acted as a body that controlled the odekuro. Like other superiors of Akan social institutions the odekuro was removable, but he could only be replaced by another abusuapanin of the asasewura. The odekuro managed the affairs of the akura, directed common projects, acted as a judge and commander in the event of war, as well as represented the akura in external contacts. In the organization of the oman he was also an intermediary in the fiscal system[26]. He was not, however, a state (oman) dignitary sensu stricto, he had no right to the ceremonial sword, afona, which was a feature of officials of high rank[27].

The oman was the most important unit of the Akan communities and was independent to a much greater degree than the akura, even though in many spheres of life the latter was "a world in itself". The oman is also the most interesting for our considerations, because all data recorded in European sources as well as available oral traditions refer to it, while other, smaller units of the social organization such as the akura almost entirely escape the descriptions compiled by Europeans in the 18th century. Apart from this the oman is the most dynamic of Akan institutions, which makes it a especially interesting subject of historical analysis.

The oman was lead by the omanhene, whom we are willing to call a ruler as the oman usually constituted the highest level of social organization, as well as due to other features of this institution. In this respect the omanhene is different from the odekuro, for whom the title of headman seems more appropriate.

The latter was the leader of a tribal institution which was very rarely independent (at least in the period covered by the sources, during the formation of early statehood), and did not, as a rule, undergo any evolution.

The omanhene exercized his power with the participation of the mpaninfo, that is the elders (pl. of panin). The mpaninfo consisted mainly of dignitaries connected with the military structure, and known as the nsafohene: Ko'ntire Hene and Akwamu Hene - the highest of rank, practically the deputies of the commander in chief, Adonten Hene - the commander of the main forces, Benkum and Nifa Hene - the commanders of the left and right wing, Twafo Hene, commander of the front line forces, Kyidom Hene - of the arrieregarde, and Ankobea Hene - of the ruler's personal guard. Besides these the counsel of elders included the Abusua Hene, the head of the ruling clan but not from the lineage of the ruler, the adehye, and Gyase Hene, a dignitary who played the role of a majordomus and managed the servants and court officials. And, last but not least, like in the other two Akan institutions we have described so far, a woman closely related to the ruler known as the ohema, usually the sister, more rarely mother of the omanhene, played a very important role in decision making[28].

At first glance this system seems to be a repetition of the model we have already described, only transferred to a higher level of social organization. However, although the general outline seems similar, it possesses a number of features which distinguish it markedly from the system of administrating an akura or fiefo. The key differences in the structure of the oman compared with the lower levels of administration seem to be the role played by the Abusua Hene, nsafohene, and Gyase Hene.

The existence of the institution of the Abusua Hene indicates a peculiar transference of power, for the omanhene was the most distinguished member of the ruling clan, while at the same time direct supremacy over his own clan was beyond his competence[29]. This feature is absent from the organization of the akura, where the reverse is true, for it is the leadership of the asasewura clan which makes one eligible for the post of odekuro. The fact that the stools of the other members of the mpaninfo belonged

to the clans, but were not at the same time the thrones of clan leaders, is of similar significance.

The military organization of the akura was also similar to the one found in the oman, although it was much less complex (the degree of complexity of the military system at oman level is also far from certain, the number of army units quoted above applies above all to the aman of Ashanti, and to the time of Rattray's investigations). Moreover, we are lead to assume that the akura military organization is secondary, and was somehow imposed by the superior structure. The main principle behind the formation of the akura was a division according to a key of kinship, which was realized in the participation of the mmusuapaninfo in the badwa. The composition and character of the mmpaninfo of the oman, on the other hand, was based primarily on the military and territorial organization of an early state.

Individual nsafohene possessed domains, usually groups of nkura, which provided them with both, income as well as warriors for their units. The system of government as well as the internal structure of such a domain could resemble that of the oman. This kind of 'aman within the oman' often lead European scholars to draw a parallel with the system of feudal dependence[30] in medieval Europe. In Akan terminology these 'vasals' were called biremponfo. There are two main types of situations which may have lead to this state of affairs; by way of annexation, in one way or another, of an existing oman, or a grant from the ruler. An example of the first type may be the incorporation of Asamankese into Akim Abuakwa after the conquest of Akwamu[31], of the second - Ko'ntire Hene and Akwamu Hene of Kumasi, who in time became very powerful biremponfo[32]. It seems certain, however, that the first of the described types is generically earlier, and that it is only later that the Ashanti system adapted the institution of 'homage' biremponfo as a form of rewarding officials. This claim is based on the fact that the evidence about Ko'ntire and Akwamu Hene applies to the capital oman of Ashanti at a relatively late period. (Rattray, who is the source of our information on the subject, believes that the structure of the state of Ashanti remained principally unchanged from the battle of Feyiase in the beginning of the 18th century, and he

infers about earlier periods from the results of his field investigations). However, it seems more appropriate to assume that in the 18th century members of the counsel did not possess the status of nearly independent rulers, despite the fact that by virtue of their role in the military system they held control over parts of the oman territory.

The organization of the military force of the Akan peoples demands a separate description. The main institution here was the asafo.

The asafo consisted of men capable of bearing arms from one akura or district. Every unit had a clearly defined place in the oman army, or even in its part, according to the divisions reflected in the titles of the military officials. Thus groups of nkura composed the left wing, centre, etc., under the command of respective nsafohene. Similarly, every part of the army had an internal subdivision which corresponded to the division of the whole. Every asafo unit had its own passwords, countersigns, signals played on drums or horns, by which it could be identified. It made a public appearance during the celebrations of the festival of the yam, Odwira, when a kind of military parade took place[33].

A very interesting detail is connected with the institution of the asafo. Twumasi Appiah writes that the asafo unit was homogenous with regard to the ntoro[34]. Unfortunately this has not been explored, although the asafo has been the subject of detailed investigations by the colonial governments due its political role as opposition to the system of indirect government[35].

Reindorf, on the other hand, has a different conception of the way in which the asafo functioned:

> "The Tshis alone have an organized order in their army. ...the Kings of Ashanti have not only to appoint captains over their army, but they have to organize it and also to increase it, as the occasion may be. Before a captain is appointed, the King has to collect recruits in readiness. They may be either captives in a recent war, or his own subjects whom be bought as slaves when they failed to pay a certain sum imposed on them as a fine on oath they had sworn, or they may have been

bequeathed to him by a deceased chief or captain. Over a number of from 500 to 1000 men thus obtained, the King appoints a captain, ... Those subjects bought have to remain in their own towns, but the captives have to stay permanently in the town of the captain, whilst himself stays in the capital. Other presents are made to the captain by the King, a name is given to the band of the asafo, and now the captain and his men are handed over to any of the generals of the five divisions."[36]

Apart from the features characteristic of the asafo, Reindorf or his informants, confuse it with the fekuo, which seems to be indicated by the participation of slaves or captives permanently stationed in the capital. The fekuo was a kind of slave guard, which was created, according to traditions, by Osei Tutu, the founder of the power of Ashanti[37]. The name of fekuo was also given to other, not necessarily military, services, which were subordinated directly to the King of the Ashanti, for instance bata - the merchants, and nkwansrafo - the police and courriers[38].

Regardless of whether Reindorf was writing about the fekuo or about the asafo which was undergoing a transformation in the mode of the former, it is clear that in Akan society there existed two kinds of military organizations, the asafo of decidedly tribal origin, and the fekuo, the origin of which seems to be strongly connected with the structures of early statehood, and which resembled a chief's retinue.

The third remaining difference between the model of the oman and of the akura is the question of the gyase hene and the institution which he was the head of, and which we might describe as a court. It consisted of a great variety of officials, starting with the traditionalists, akyeme, down to the cooks and servants[39]. It is important to include the treasurer, sana hene, in the gyase, as well as tax collectors who were his subordinates. The very fact of their existence indicates some sort of fiscal system, while the inclusion of them in the personal court of the omanhene points to their possible origin as a form of control of the ruler's economic activity. However, revenue collected from various types of taxes did not only come from the omanhene's own domain, and it was not his sole property. The elders of the oman also had their share in it.

The above social structure is very frequently considered by ethnographical as well as historical studies to be universal for all the Akan peoples the minor local differences being of little significance[40]. However, African social structures are often believed to lack any evolution, to exist unchanged for many centuries. The described social organization of the Akans is therefore often transposed into the past without any modification, and believed to function in the 18th or even 17th century. This may be a result of a certain general view of African civilization, or, quite on the contrary, of a lack of criticism towards the vision of history presented by tradition. Due to the nature of ethnographical investigations as well as the time when they were conducted their results can be applied to the Akan social structures of the second half of the 19th century. Transposing them into the past is very risky as it would suggest an improbably quick process of the formation of various types of institutions, followed by a very long period of stagnation. This interpretation seems very doubtful, for the history of the Gold Coast in the 18th and 19th centuries was not marked by social stability, although the great migrations in the forest regions were a closed process by then. This is the period of the rapid and eventful development of the state of Ashanti which exercised superiority, with varied degree of force, over all the Akan peoples. This fact could not fail to exert an influence on their social organization.

It is also difficult to accept the view that once the Akans had permanently settled on the Gold Coast in the 16th century, they were capable of creating a social structure of such high complexity and full of interdependent institutions in just about a hundred years. We must also note that the emergence of particular territorial institutions, especially the aman, is closely linked with the expansion of settlement.

Another reason for treating ethnographical data with some degree of skepticism is the practice of 'inventing' tradition under the influence of the British colonial administration. The Native Jurisdiction Ordinances issued in 1878-1924 and the Native Administration Ordinances, 1927, introduced a system of indirect government, and thereby made the traditional administrative system much more uniform. The aman, called "native states" in

these acts, constituted the highest level of African structures, which came into direct contact with the British administration. Because of this a number of political formations which had not been aman before the colonial period invented a tradition of being an oman in the past, in order to make sure they were represented[41]. The influence of the British acts was not only felt in these situations, for some aman which had indeed existed before colonization were modified to suit the superior administration of the province. Whereas ethnographical description often neglects these modifications.

Our attention, however, is drawn by the possible impact of the functioning of the state of Ashanti on the shape of the social organization of the Akans, and this does not seem to have only lead to formal uniformity.

The ethnographical data we have presented in this chapter may prove helpful in investigating the Akan culture. However, despite our efforts to reconstruct the genesis of particular institutions and their structures, we must state that ethnography is uncapable of providing data about the early stages of social organization. Providing evidence for the historian is not the aim of ethnographical studies, and the sphere of interest of these investigations is also quite different.

Another drawback of using ethnographical data, from our point of view, is that apart from distinguishing the Ashanti as those who achieved the highest level of social development, and the Fanti, who constitute a separate subgroup among the Akans, these studies pay little attention to evidence from other regions.

Nevertheless it is clear that the results of ethnographical studies are essential for the correct interpretation of European sources from the period of our interest, as well oral tradition. We are lead to treat them, therefore, as a special type of historical evidence. However, due to the drawbacks described above, it is only in combination with the sources of the two groups that the full significance of ethnographic data will emerge. This time the sources will refer explicitly to Akim, which is the object of our investigations.

Our attention will be drawn by two major problems: the changes in the nature of already existing institutions, and the formation

of new ones as well as extinction of others. For we would be embracing the other extreme if we supposed that all the institutions and the relations between them were created as late as the 18th century.

Notes

[1]Popov, and other Russian scholars after him, differentiate a structure superior to the abusua, abusuapon. In practice, however, they treat it as equivalent to the abusua (in the English terminological sense, which is how we use it). Popov applies the term abusua to local segments.

[2]Rattray 1929:62-63, Zajączkowski 1974:29.

[3]Rattray 1929:65-66.

[4]Meyerowitz 1951:30, Antubam 1963:149.

[5]Danquah 1928:243.

[6]Rattray 1929:67-68.

[7]Twumasi Appiah 1971:183, Fortes 1950,Christensen 1958:20.

[8]Popov 1982:43.

[9]Allot 1953:27, Busia 1958:1-6, Rattray 1923:47-48, Meyerowitz 1951:118-120.

[10]Busia 1958:6, Rattray 1923:43-44.

[11]Wilks 1975:726.

[12]Herskowitz 1937:184, Danquah 1951:118-120, Rattray 1923:47-48, Meyerowitz 1951:118-120.

[13]Rattray 1926:48, Manoukian 1950:24, Meyerowitz 1951:118, Field 1970:151.

[14]Wilks 1975:339-344.

[15]Fortes 1950:253, 258; 1970:169-177, 272.

[16]Rattray 1929:2-3.

[17]Rattray 1929:14-16, Zajączkowski 1964:37, Field 1970:196.

[18]Fortes 1949:69.

[19]Rattray 1929:3, Fortes 1949:66.

[20]Lystad 1958:51, cf. footnote 32, 33.

[21]Twumasi Appiah 1971:177.

[22]Gouth 1971:469.

[23]Rattray 1929:70.

[24]Twumasi Appiah 1971:21.

[25]Twumasi Appiah 1971:264.

[26]Busia 1958:63, Popov 1982:48.

[27]Rattray 1928:87, 118, Kyerematen 1971:4.

[28]Rattray 1929:88-90, Busia 1958:90, Todoroff 1962:400, Field 1970:47, Terray 1981:299.

[29]Rattray 1929:87.

[30]Rattray 1929:76, 106, Potiechin 1950.

[31]Addo-Fening 1975:65.

[32]Rattray 1929:65.

[33]Lloyd 1964:22, Hayford Casley 1970:97, 85, Datta 1972:307-308.

[34]Twumasi Appiah 1970:183.

[35]Simensen 1974, 1975.

[36]Reindorf 1895:119.

[37]Busia 1959:92-93, 218-219, Nketia 1969:103, Todoroff 1962:403.

[38]Wilks 1975:726.

[39]Rattray 1929:91, lists the typical personel.

[40]Istoria Gany 1985:23, Arhin 1967:70.

[41]Henige 1973:223-235.

Chapter II

AKIM BEFORE THE CONQUEST BY ASHANTI, AS PRESENTED BY THE EUROPEAN SOURCES

AKim is situated in the eastern part of the tropical forest region of the Gold Coast, in the Birrim river basin. Today three traditional political units (aman) have the word 'AKim' in their name. These are AKim Abukwa, AKim Kotoku, and AKim Bosume. The populations of these aman has preserved the traditions of their origin from Adansi, a region situated in the fork of the rivers Ofin and Pra, which all AKans believe to be their cradle[1].

Despite the fact that AKim has an inland location without access to the sea, it became known to Europeans fairly early due to the short distance as well as trade. The first definite information about AKim goes from the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries.

The two earliest texts, by Barbot and Bosman, describe the social organization and political situation of AKim in the following words:

> "This country was formerly a monarchy, and now a commonwealth, after several changes and revolutions in the government, which renders it less formidable to its neighbours, because of the factions and divisions the republican government is subject to ... and therefore this country, for want of unity and a good understanding among the natives, is not so powerful as formerly." (Barbot)[2]
>
> "This country far as far it is known to us, was formerly under a monarchical government, but the present successor being yet but young, and betraying but too palpable signs of a cruel nature, hath not been able to make himself master of the whole land, but is obliged to be content with a part. For the governing men of the Kingdom fearing he will prove a great

tyrant, to restrain him, have taken a part of the administration into their hands; so it is a sort of commonwealth; which proves very well for Accany and Aquamboe; for if the government became monarchal, no divisions would arise amongst them, and they would be at leisure to prey on their neighbours" (Bosman)[3].

Despite the fact that Barbot visited the Gold Coast some 20 years before Bosman, information presented by him should not be seen as referring to an earlier situation. His "Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea" was first published in the thirtieth of the 18th century, and bears clear signs of dependence on the most famous of the known accounts of the western coast of Africa, namely Bosman's or, more precisely, on its English translation. These borrowings are sometimes even repetitions of whole fragments, not only travesties, which seems to be the case of the passage quoted above. It seems fairly natural that an author whose experience of Guinea was limited to participation in an expedition that lasted a few months at the most, had to consult other sources, for he could not depend wholly on his own observations. In this respect he differs from Bosman, who had spent many years on the coast and who was the author of a comprehensive description of the region. Another reason might be that he was afraid of contradicting a famed authority on the subject, and Bosman's description was definitely was considered as such[4].

The nonchalant manner in which the author of the description (not of the account) treated historical information about the black population is yet another problem. The belief that African communities virtually did not change was characteristic of Europeans not only of the 18th century, hence the negligent attitude towards perception, especially of chronology, in the descriptions which were considered to retain their validity over decades. For these reasons Bosman's text will be our chief source of information.

The description indicates that before the period referred to by the author Akim was a 'monarchy', that is in terms of the European observer, a social body governed by one ruler, probably to some degree hereditary. Apart from the ruler there were

"governing men", who held a strong position even before the division of Akim, and who limited the power of the ruler. Who were these dignitaries, Bosman does not say. The question of the succession to the throne and the reaction of the nobles is equally unclear. The situation as presented by Bosman is evidently a record of the official account of events, which was to justify ex post the fact of limiting the powers of the successor to the stool. By giving cruelty and an inclination to tyranny on the part of the ruler as reasons for the action of the dignitaries, this explanation suggests that succession was independent of the "governing men", automatic, connected perhaps with the designation by the predecessor or some other group (for instance relatives from the same lineage, assuming that the "governing men" did not belong to it)..

However, having stated that the data provided by Bosman embody a form of transmitting tradition, we do not have to accept the validity of the reasons presented as the justification of this 'coup d'etat'. The real reasons could have been completely different and have nothing to do with the personal character of the ruler, which is so strongly emphasized in the account. They could have been connected with a attempt on the part of the ruler to achieve greater centralization, or quite the opposite, with a growth of separatist tendencies among the nobles, or else with unknown matters of custom or religion, which it was felt should best be kept secret.

One aspect, however, deserves special attention. This type of situation could not have taken place in a political unit such as the Akan oman, for the oman in the strict sense, possessed forms of ratifying the ruler, as well as ensured the possibility of his destoolment by the counsel of elders. Keeping in mind the doubtful validity of Bosman's description we must admit that such a justification would seem extremely incongruent with what we know about the functioning of these institutions. The effect of the described turn of events seems particularly interesting. The powers of the ruler were not limited as a result of the capture of some of his competences by the counsel, but due to a limitation of the territorial range of these powers. It seems highly probable, therefore, that the territorial division

corresponded to the existence of domains (or districts) of the ruler and the individual officials. Bosman, and especially Barbot, clearly indicate that this did not result in the total disintegration of Akim. The system that emerged is described as a "sort of commonwealth" or "republican government", and not as a break up into smaller kingdoms. The term "commonwealth" should clearly be understood as a system of sharing power between the nobles and the ruler, where the position of the latter does not (in reality) greatly differ from that of his nobles. It would therefore be similar to the literal understanding of the term.

The described 'revolution' probably took place at the end of the 17th century. Bosman, who was writing at the turn of the centuries, treats it as an event which took place years rather than decades before his time.

The changes which took place do not appear to have been a single 'coup d'etat'. On the contrary, rivalries between the nobles continued ("several changes and revolutions", "factions and divisions"), which lead to a weakening of the position of Akim to the advantage of its neighbours, especially Akwamu, which was the most important power in the eastern part of Gold Coast at the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th century[5].

Further information about the structure of Akim can be found in a description by Rømer, a Danish factor from Accra, which dates from the mid-18th century. His account is much more detailed than Bosman's.

He states that Akim is situated in the north-west, 160-200 Danish miles[6] inland, its inhabitants call themselves 'Akenistes', and the country is divided into three 'Kingdoms'. Rømer calls the kingdoms by the names of their respective rulers at the time when Akim conquered Akwamu, that is 1730[7], which is also a time when it established closer relations with the Europeans and factors took a greater interest in this country. These rulers were Bang, Frempung, and Ursue[8].

According to Rømer the territories of these rulers were completely separate. Thus Frempung's territory bordered with Ashanti, Ursue's was to stretch from the sea coast till the depth of about 20 days journey inland[9], and Bang's was probably situated between the two.

This rough outline seems to be further confirmed by Rømer when he says that the Adampi as well as the mountain Negroes, that is the coastal regions, were subordinated to Ursue after the victory over Akwamu[10].

Rømer clearly believes the three districts to be more or less equal in size, and gives an approximate number of warriors which they could raise - in 1744 (after the defeat by the Ashanti, as their allies in the war with the Fanti) 10 000 men each[11], in 1749 about 40 000 each[12]. Similarly, in other parts of the text Rømer seems to believe that each of the districts constitutes a third of the whole. However, we also have to examine other data for data on this matter.

The manner in which spheres of influence were established with regard to control over European forts by respective rulers was marked by an evident lack of parity.

> "Bang supervised the Dutch and English forts, Frempung was Christiansborg's protector, and Ursue ruled the Adampi and Mountain Negroes in addition to Fredensborg, which was built during his reign."[13]

Despite the fact that Rømer treats all the districts as principally equal, the above record suggests that Bang's part was decidelly larger than that of the others. The value of his domain could have been compensated by the trade turnover of particular forts, but this does not seem very probable. At a time when they had finally achieved direct contact with the Europeans, and moreover, when the structures of trading were disturbed by the fall of Akwamu, it is the number of forts which must have mattered most for the Akim and not their potential or possible efficiency. Hence, if we are to assume the number of controlled points on the coast as our criterion, Bang appears to have benefited most from the division of the spoils, as his portion included the Dutch forts of Crevecoeur and Beraku, the English forts of James and Winneba[14], as well as smaller factories. Moreover, two of the forts under his control were situated in Accra, which was the chief 'port' of Akwamu, and which had no equal on the Gold Coast as far as the trade turnover is concerned. This is a fact confirmed by all the sources[15].

Among the Dutch forts divided between Frempung and Ursue,

Christiansborg, also situated in Accra, was definitely more important than Fredensborg, which was a new outpost and created after the division of the spoils (its construction was begun in 1734)[16].

Another important feature of the division which the Akim rulers brought about is that it concerned only rents payed for the forts and not exclusive trade rights. Rømer for instance describes the sale of alcohol to Bang in Christiansborg[17]. Therefore, even if we assume that Bang did not control most of the trade with the Europeans due to the importance of Christiansborg, which was a prosperous fort, we must admit that the part of Ursue was the smallest.

Moreover, Rømer calls Bang "the most important King in Akim"[18], although it is not certain whether he means a kind of overlordship, or simply the most powerful of the three.

The above considerations lead us to a conclusion that in those fragments of his description where he wanted to give an overall picture of the situation Rømer presents a schematic model of 1/3, 1/3, 1/3, which suggests that he was not really well acquainted with the subject. At the same time other information supplied by Rømer, especially that which deals with situations and events he himself observed, causes the above model to falter, as if against the intentions of the author.

Leaving the question of the sovereignty of the three domains of Akim aside for the time being, let us examine Rømer's account of the social structure of these districts, and to what extent they are self-contained and independent.

Rømer's description contains a great deal of information, usually of indirect nature, which enables us to draw conclusions about the organization and character of the Akim districts in the period when the greatest changes took place. We have to bear in mind, however, that all the data have to be viewed very critically, as they are not based on Rømer's own observations but for the most part on accounts of local informants. This inevitably results in complications connected with the criticism of the source, which have been discussed in the introduction. Nonetheless it does not deprive it of value.

The position of the ruler in the district is described with

the most detail. Rømer himself seems not so much to overlook, as to be uninterested in the levels of social structure below the ruler. The ruler will also be of particular interest for our considerations, so we shall approach the structure of the district from the 'top'.

The activities of the ruler can be divided into a number of principal spheres. This division, of course, is to a great extent arbitrary and theoretical, as for the Akans a division of power in the strict sense does not exist, although they are aware of the different areas of governing. On the other hand, traditional African terms connected with power are difficult to render due to their specific nature.

The first of the principal areas will be connected with matters of administration and justice, an area in which, in the understanding of a traditional society, power is expressed most distinctly. The two fields appear to be separate, but in a traditional society, governed by common law, both of them are based on the 'execution of justice', and all management has the nature of a sentence, be it in a criminal or any other case[19]. Another area, which we treat separately from the administration in the broad sense, is that of finances and all matters connected with it. The third - the economic activity of the ruler, both his own as well as his control over others. The fourth, and by no means the least important, will be the question of the ruler's position in relation to the military organization[19a].

The first piece of information supplied by Rømer is concerned with the reign of Ursue. He describes the cruel laws applied by this ruler (pulling out a jaw as a punishment for theft) in the first period of his reign, but

> "After a few years Ursue became bored with his own tyranny, and after having learned how the Europeans punished their thieves etc. he followed their example."[20]

It is difficult to establish what was the latter manner of dealing with thieves, perhaps it was a fine, which would be a change in an extremely interesting direction. But the fact that Ursue was the source of law and that a change of it lay in his power is very striking. Among the Akans the law is sanctioned by tradition and custom, so we cannot rightly assume that the ruler

is its ultimate source in the oman. However, tradition does record cases when a change of law was brought about by the ruler (for instance among the Ashanti)[21]. We must also remember that formation of new social structures and transformation of others was characteristic of the period we are interested in. The law also came under the scope of these changes, for it did not come into being all at once, and in its final form.

It must be noted that tradition attributes events such as an introduction of a new law only to some rulers, that is those who held a special position, as for instance the founders of dynasties. This is significantly connected with the identification of Ursue, which will be dealt with in detail in the course of our considerations.

A similar position of the ruler in Frempung's domain is indicated by the following anecdote, which Rømer quotes as an illustration of the superstitious nature of the Akim.

> "It is said that once Frempung's men found a whole rock of gold in a mine. This was reported to the king and he was asked whether they should take chisels, as the travat season was approaching? Frempung consulted the great men and the resolution was that as this rock must be the mother or father of the small gold, nobody was allowed to touch it, and the men should leave that mine and start at another place."[22]

Leaving aside the question of the advice of the 'great men', which we shall deal with separately, we must stress the fact that Frempung was asked to pass judgement as the supreme authority. This is probably connected with the prerogatives of the ruler in matters concerning gold, which among the Akans is characteristic of the supreme lord (for instance among the Ashanti they were transferred from the amanhene to the Asantehene)[23].

Judicial activity was also a substantial source of income for the rulers as well as the chieftains, for fines were often the punishment for various kinds of offences. Bosman, Barbot, as well as Rømer, all confirm this view[24] in their descriptions of the customs of the inhabitants of the Gold Coast. Although their accounts do not refer explicitly to Akim, there are no reasons to suppose that it was exceptional in this respect. If it had been, we could expect that it would be mentioned separately. The

question of punishment is similarly presented in ethnographical literature dealing with the Gold Coast[25].

The sphere of finances appears in a number of fragments of Romer's study. The existance of treasures in the domains is confirmed by accounts of how they were hidden away before the conflict with the Ashanti.

> "The young AKims [the term indicates the successors of the rulers who had been defeated by the Ashanti, and who payed with their lives for the defeat] now had their ancestors big treasures to dispose of, but nevertheless they used it as poorly as their ancestors. It is told that Frempung's successor, along with 50 slaves spent many nights hiding the gold in different places before going to war. Nobody knew where it was hidden except their noble wives, who at once were sent to the place where the remaining people were to meet in case the war went against them. The 50 slaves who had helped to hide the gold were killed so that if captured they should not betray the secret"[26].

The source does not provide any information about the existance of a tax system. We do know, however, that the rulers of the districts collected a tax for the forts (his control over Christiansborg enabled Frempung to collect 32 rigsdollars monthly - which was also what the previous AKwamu ruler had been collecting[27]. The sum was equivalent to the price of seven Danish muskets, the most expensive weapons on the Gold Coast. The validity of this information seems to be confirmed by the fact that the sum equalled 1 benda in the local currency)[28].

The existence of some form of revenue collecting may be indirectly suggested (though vaguely) by the way Frempung exercised control over his own wives, who lived in various places all over the domain. A wife who have birth to a child was to furnish "a grain of millie corn for each child". However, any conclusions about analogous methods of collecting taxes are inadvisable here, and in this case we cannot extrapolate too far. We are certain that there existed payments and tributes enforced on larger political units, but this will be given a separate treatment together with the relationship between AKim and its neighbours. The very usage of the term 'tribute' suggests that some contingents or payments did in fact exist at a lower level.

In the case of Akim the problem appears to be more complicated. The manner of providing for the ruler, his court and family, may not be connected with the question of finances *sensu stricto*, but remains closely related to it due to the possible similarity of the channels through which the means were procured, and this may constitute a kind of embryo of the fiscal system. Rømer provides the following information on the subject:

> "[Frempung] had, I'm sure, like all other Akim Kings, approximately one thousand wives scattered around the country, but during the past twenty years he never threatened them to reveal their secrets. He travelled around the country every year, not to claim the children the wives had borne as his own, but to ask each of his wives to give him a grain of 'millie corn' for each child, and thus kept count of his children."[29]

We have here a classical example of a rex ambulans, whose journeying court is kept by the products from the ruler's domain, while a system of transferring these products to some sort of centre does not seem to exist. It is not certain, however, whether the description is valid only for the ruler's domain, or whether it refers to some system of collecting taxes in kind by a king travelling in his country.

An extract dealing with the customs in Bang's domain presents the quasi-fiscal character of the system even more clearly.

> "In each town they got hold of three or four women, the number according to the size of the town, and asked them to remain there. Then they visited these different towns once a year, letting these women eat fetish to confess who had touched them. The women revealed this quite voluntarily as they received a percentage of the fine imposed on the culprits. The gallants were then sold as slaves or their friends could buy them free. The Akim Kings were also commited to this practice and every one who in those days visited the coast, knows about the line of buyers who would follow Bang, the Akim King, when he made his annual tour."[30]

It is a most fortunate coincidence that Rømer could observe Akim in a very significant, if not the most important, period in the country's development. The reason why this particular moment

is considered so vital is the conquest of Akwamu and the annexation of its territories, or territories dependent on it.

The Akwamu system is much better known than Akim, and one of its characteristic features is the existance of a relatively complex administration[31]. If indeed the payments of the European forts previously collected by Akwamu were continued in an unchanged form (as we know they had), the situation in the annexed dependent territories might have been similar, although the latter, being directly involved in the war, were much less stable. We must then try to examine Rømer for records of this state of affairs.

Describing the customs of Ursue's domain he states:

> "Ursue did not practice the abominable custom of marrying women and let them go their own way in order to seduce young men. He only had 400 to 500 wives, whom he kept in a building, described as a Turkish serail, surrounded by high walls, and guarded at night by a great number of sentries."[32]

The above fragment yields some very significant suggestions. Ursue did not have to depend on the structure of his family for the upkeep of his court - clearly he must have had a different source of income for this purpose, which the other two rulers did not have. It is difficult to imagine that his income from trade or justice was so great that it enabled him to introduce such a change.

Although in a previously quoted extract Rømer states that all the Akim rulers had wives all over the country, it might be an omission, or the effect of describing the situation over a longer and more eventful period.

We should now combine the above information with the previous account of Ursue's reformist tendencies. The region where the changes accidentally recorded by Rømer take place is not a matter of coincidence. The layout of the domains indicates that it was Ursue who took the lands which had previously paid tribute to the Akwamu. The existence of these tributes is noted in the account of Tilleman, who visited Akwamu in the last years of the 17th century. He writes that the ruler

> "every year, after the harvest, receives a part of the crop from everyone who lives in his kingdom."[33]

The fact that Ursue carried out reforms, as if wanting to adapt to a new order, may lead us to think that he took over the collection of tribute, either a part of it or the whole, and this was why he could afford to give up the rex ambulans model. This would suggest that the fiscal system either did not exist at all, or played an insignificant role in the other parts of Akim.

Economic activity was another sphere of the ruler's interest which we have mentioned. Here the situation is equally complex. It includes both, the ruler's own undertakings, as well as those that came under his control. The division, seemingly clear, is much less so in reality due to the different nature of African ideas connected with it. As far as the principal forms of this activity are concerned, they are agriculture (in the broad sense), gold mining, trade, and raiding expeditions, which were also treated as a source of income.

The role which the ruler's wives played, as described above, may have been in some way connected with agriculture - it is possible that apart from seducing men they could have been engaged in farming. The described "grain of millie corn", a gift of symbolic nature, and according to Rømer, a way of keeping accounts, may have indicated a connection with the land.

A more explicit connection with the economy is revealed in the description of the actions undertaken by Ursue (before the changes he introduced). Rømer writes:

> "He [Ursue] sent one of his generals and two to three thousands men to Crepe every year to catch slaves, and he sometimes joined himself. He only sold a few of them, and distributed the rest through the country".[34]

We have here the evidence repetitive raids, practically a permanent exploitation of a particular territory, Crepe, a name which in the Twi language signifies the Ewe peoples living to the east of Volta.

The next spheres are trade and the use of slaves within the country. The latter problem especially needs more detailed treatment.

Slaves, and we conclude from the context that we are dealing here with large groups of people belonging to the ruler, could be used in two principal ways; on the ruler's plantations, or i

gold mines. Rømer informs us about the existance of mines which belonged to the ruler:

"The blacks have informed us that Frempung has owned mines, and each man working for him had to deliver one pint of pure gold dust a day".[35]

All the European writers agreed that AKim was the main source of large quantities of gold, and of exceptionally good quality. They either report about it directly, or enable us to draw this conclusion from the way they describe the role of Accra and the eastern coast in trade[36]. Thus we could expect a large number of mines in this country. Rømer, however, like the other Europeans, knows nothing about their location. He believes that the 'entire Gold Coast is a gold bearing area, but is not exploited everywhere[37]. Bosman introduces a certain localization, for the most part accurate, but it proves of little use with respect to AKim. Like the others he treats this country as a whole, including it nevertheless in his list of gold bearing areas.

The problem of using slave labour has not been finally resolved. Terray[38] claims that it was used on a large scale already in the 18th century, but the claim can be disputed as his main argument rests on the above fragment by Rømer concerning AKim, as well as the following:

"each of the workers must deliver 8 ounces of gold every day, which is considered the minimum of what the master will accept,"[39]

He interprets the word 'master' ('maitre') as master in relation to his slave. It is an acceptable interpretation but not the only one, for the above two extracts can also be seen as an illustration of the ruler's established share in the output, the rest of which belongs to the free subjects who work in the mine. On the other hand, it does not rule out the slave status of the workers. We cannot, however, render the original African concepts in European terms such as 'slave'. Traditional AKan law contains several categories of non-free people, and the idea of slavery is different altogether. The boundary between freedom and slavery is much less distinct. The AKan term "aKoa", which may indicate a slave as well as a subject or inferior, causes similar difficulties[40].

The only fragment in which Rømer speaks explicitly about slavery does not refer directly to Akim but to slave women from this country who may have been working in Akwamu. Thus it is only an auxilliary piece of information.

"Au bord de la mer, d'apres ce que j'ai pu constater, ce sont des femmes esclaves originaires d'Akim qui extraient l'or..."[41]

The other major form of slave exploitation, namely on plantations, is also not absolutely certain. Basing his claims on the accounts of Tilleman and Rask, Kea convincingly argues that this form of slave labour existed in Akwamu before the year 1730 as an agricultural backing for power centres, both on a local as well as central level[42]. At this point, however, the problem of Ursue's domain re-emerges. Does Rømer's account deal with this ruler due to some coincidence, because he happens to be best acquainted with it, or is it a reflection of the uniqueness of this region?

The first possibility can be discarded, because for Rømer Frempung's domain was the most interesting as he was the immediate protector and partner of Christiansborg. It is about him that Rømer informs us in most detail. Next comes Ursue, who also held control over the Danes, and the last is Bang. The fact that Ursue's domain lay closest to the sea coast does not seem to be of any significance, as it lies beyond the scope of observation at any rate, like the other two. Only a few non-Akan settlements controlled by Ursue were in fact situated on the coast.

The possible accidental nature of the information cannot be verified, while the suggestion of a certain uniqueness appears plausible. We may assume, therefore, that slaves could have been used to work on plantations, and frequent raids undertaken to capture them could have been a means of reconstructing the system, weakened perhaps at a time of conflict as a result of devastation or flight of the slaves. This interpretation seems to be supported by Rømer who says that the raids were continued until a certain moment, and later Ursue did not kidnap large groups of people.

The next argument in support of the above thesis does not

strictly deal with the question of employing slave labour in the economy, but with the previously described problem of control over the social structure. However, due to the fact that Rømer uses the term "slave" and compares the situation with Ursue's capture of the people of Crepe, it also throws a light on the question of slavery. This is how Rømer describes the Akims treatment of their Akwamu prisoners of war:

> "Most African nations sold their prisoners (or according to Negro speech, ate them) but the Akims were wiser. They kept these slaves in their country and permitted them to marry their own slaves and treated them so well that the Aqvamboes quickly forgot their own country and King, and became, in the course of five years, equals to the native born Akims".[43]

If we compare the above information with the previous texts we may be lead to believe that the slaves Akwamu originating from held a different position than the others. Rømer clearly says that before the introduction of reforms Ursue treated slaves very severely. The text quoted above on the other hand clearly indicates a tendency towards the assimilation of prisoners, even if we doubt the probability of their having achieved an equal status with the free Akim within a short period of time.

It must be noted that the change is not a result of a spontaneous treatment of the Akwamu population by the Akim (although we must remember the close ethnic relations), but rather of a conscious policy on the part of the rulers. It is also rather improbable that such a situation could have occured if the prisoners were distributed among numerous owners, for then the ruler's actual influence on their treatment must have been very limited. The possibility of them having remained under the direct supervision of the ruler is much more feasible, and the fact that Romer calls them slaves may be a result of the lack of full identity between the words 'akoa' and 'slave'[44]. The sentence "They kept these slaves in their country" seems to be strongly suggestive of this situation.

The next sphere of the ruler's economic activity is his participation in trade. For Rømer the rulers are clearly the principal partners in trade. We have already described the control they held over the forts and the payments they levied.

It is the rulers who are to ensure the exchange of goods and organize the expeditions, especially as Rømer says that these involved large groups of people:

"The Akims usually arrived in groups of 1 to 2000 men when they travelled to the seashore in order to trade".[45]

The role of Frempung in trade is described in another fragment, which refers to his successor:

"Appau, an honest negro, who together with his uncle's and his own goods used to come to our fort every year".[46]

It is difficult to determine whether others took part in organizing trade on the basis of this case, as in a matrilinear society such as the Akans both uncle and nephew belong to the same kinship structure. It seems fairly certain, however, that the ruler played an important part. Rømer does not mention the participation in trade of any other people but the rulers. Nonetheless a note on the sale of spirits, though extremely circumspect, may suggest that other dignitaries did take part in trade with the Europeans:

"These lowly Akim did not drink spirits unless it was offered to them, and the distinguished men probably bought some".[47]

This picture is principally consistant with the one presented by Barbot and Bosman:

"Trading is the employment of prime blacks, both in rank and riches".[48]

"The trade of slaves is in a more peculiar manner the business of Kings, rich men, and prime merchants, exclusive of the inferior sort of Blacks".[49]

On the other hand, when describing inland trading partners Bosman says:

"Those who come from the inward part of the Country to traffick with us are chiefly slaves: one of which, on whom the master reposes the greatest trust is appointed the chief of this caravan: But when he comes to us he is not treated as a slave , but as a very great merchant".[50]

In the beginning of the 18th century the Akim were also treated as 'inland Negroes', that is those whose territories did not reach the coast.

However, if we take a closer look at the trade customs of

Akwamu, we observe that apart from the rich and powerful members of society the inferior subjects also came in direct contact with the Europeans. These "siccadings"[51], as Rømer calls them, conducted their affairs on their own, and mostly kidnapped people, using trickery or force, in order to sell them in small groups either to European merchants or to black intermediaries. The "banditry" of Akwamu, both the country as well as its inhabitants, is consistantly emphasized by all the authors. If Rømer does not mention these practices with reference to Akim we may suppose, despite his clear sympathy towards that people, that the phenomenon either did not exist or was much less widespread.

Among the two main types of merchandise offered by Africa gold held a particularly important position in the region of the Gold Coast. Bosman and Barbot claim that the ammounts bought in Accra excede those bought in the remaining parts of the Gold Coast. This may have been an exaggeration, but it reflects the scale of the exchange. In this area gold is found mainly in Akim, and according to Bosman it could be easily identified by its colour[52]. After the defeat of Akwamu it became the most important item of trade, probably in even greater quantities. Rømer also claims that due to the elimination of intermediaries at that time it reached the coast in a much more pure state[53].

Another important factor is that at the time of the domination of Akim in the eastern part of the Gold Coast the slave trade was greatly diminished[54]. It operated on a large scale in the preceding period, when Akwamu and Akim sold large numbers of prisoners of war captured from each other.

> "When the Akwamus were at war with the Akim blacks these people [from Nungwa] have a considerable number of good slaves to dispose of; for whilst those two inland nations make war, most of the prisoners are convey'd to Nungwa and Accra, and sold to the Europeans, who resort thither. The Akim blacks commonly carry their prisoners to Nungwa, and the Akwamus, theirs to Accra."[55]

Bosman also mentions the great numbers of slaves sold in Accra[56].

The change could have been caused by the defeat of the rival and the resulting lack of opportunity of capturing slaves.

However, the piece of information about the exploitation of Crepe in this respect seems to contradict this conclusion. We can therefore assume that the answer is connected with the behaviour of the ruler, and claim that the AKim rulers had a decisive voice in the trade with the Europeans.

The list of imported goods, especially the presence among them of arms, is also very significant for determining the exact position of the ruler.

Barbot's list of goods sold in the eastern part of the Gold Coast contains arms as the last item:

> "...for cauris or bonges, sayes, perpetuans, coesvelt cloths, slizinger linnen, bugles, red and yellow, knives, firelocks, powder, chints, salampores, and c."[57]

For Rømer on the other hand this item seems to be of primary importance when he describes trade with the AKim:

> "They (AKims) mostly bought gunpowder, guns, bullets and gunflints."[58]

It is difficult to establish the significance of the fact that Barbot places arms at the end of his list of goods, it may be accidental, but the difference between the two accounts, the diversity of goods in the case of Barbot and its lack in Rømer's list seems to be more important.

Restrictions and prohibitions of acces to the sea shore introduced in AKwamu, both administrative and propagandist in character, seem to throw some light on the subject. For instance white people were presented as sea monsters[59]. These limitations must have applied to the arms trade in particular.

> "During the reign of the first three or four Aquamboic Kings, anyone who sold gun-powder to the AKims, would be punished with the death penalty."[60]

This suggests that AKim, having previously had a limited possibility of obtaining arms and experienced an acute shortage of them, rapidly replenished its stock after 1730. This however is not an exhaustive explanation, for even if the use of arms had been widespread in AKim before the quoted date, the quality of the arms required the supply to be frequently renewed anyway, and in large quantities.

Therefore, without dismissing the previous theory (about

the influence of the restrictions), we may formulate another, namely that the increased import of fire arms to AKim was connected with the formation of state structures.

Thus we are again faced with the question of the role of the ruler in trade transactions. Increased interest in one type of goods, and so peculiar in nature, indicates that he was the one who controlled the whole procedure.

If we compare this situation with the operation of individual suppliers and intermediaries at the time of the domination of Akwamu, which has been described previously, we arrive at similar conclusions. The latter structure of trading results in a greater diversity of goods, often luxury articles, which are bought for personal use or for sale to individual customers. If, however, trading is carried on 'for the state', it seems natural that the bought goods will correspond to the needs of the state, in this case - arms. This of course does not exclude other merchandise, which certainly reached AKim.

We must resolve, however, to what extent the participation of the ruler in the trade with the Europeans, his part in these undertakings, and the import of European fire arms, is a reflection of deeper changes in the structure of AKim, such as for instance the growth of the role of the military organization.

Having approached the problem of the arms trade we will now pass on to the sphere of the military, and the ruler's part in it.

We have already mentioned the size of the army which AKim was capable of raising at different points of time. We should now take a closer look at how it was organized. Rømer claims that, as in the case of other peoples he was acquainted with, all men from the age of 16 to 60 were compelled to carry arms[61]. Detachments of subordinate peoples probably had their own separate structures, for at the time of the conflict with the Ashanti they were asked to help:

> "The AKims wanted the Accras, the mountain negroes, the Adampes, and the Ada negroes as their allies, but they did not turn up except a Dutch caboceer, by name Dacra with nearly 50 men , and some mountain negroes".[62]

Similarly, the peoples mentioned above undertook their own campaings, taking advantage of the AKim-Akwamu conflict of 1730.

It should be noted that they formed separate units with their own commanders (for example Dacra who has just been mentioned, as well as 'the King of Accra') It is interesting, however, that the remains of the Akwamu population are not mentioned in the above fragment. The omission seems hardly accidental if we recall the previous information about the assimilation of the Akwamu. If indeed, as Rømer has it, they became equal with the free Akim within five years, they were also expected to perform the same duties, that is to bear arms within the Akim military organization.

Apart from the main military structure based on general participation there existed also another, probably a cadre, elitist in nature. It does not seem to have taken part in the two major conflicts of 1730 and 1742, but this does not mean it did not exist at the time. The fact that it has not been mentioned in relation to these events is due to their nature. We are inclined to call these events wars, as distinct from smaller scale ones, which we will term millitary conflicts. The difference between the two lies not only in the dimensions, but also in the degree of involvement and influence they exerted on the life of the society. In case of a war the entire society is involved; the men are engaged in combat, while the women, children, and old people are in hiding, flee, or seek shelter in areas which are not directly threatened. Rømer describes this custom when writing, about the conflicts between the Akim and Ashanti before 1730, Akim-Akwamu, and Akim-Ashanti[63]. A war is usually lead until the final defeat of the enemy.

According to Bosman the war between Ashanti and Denkyira was of this nature; preparations for it lasted a whole year and the outcome was a total defeat of Denkyira:

"What think you, Sir? these are other sorts of Battles than are usually fought betwixt the Kings here;"[64]

He also notices the difference between the conflicts and invasions of small political organizations of the sea shore peoples, and the battles fought by the "inland potentates, such as Akim, Asiante, etc."[65]

In conflicts only a small group of warriors takes part. It is usually an invasion of a weaker opponent and it may be a war from

his point of view. However, it is seldom carried on to the ultimate defeat. It is more a form of exploitation than an attempt to overcome the enemy. It does not cause a disturbance in the structure and functioning of the society of the invading country. The invasions of Crepe by Ursue, which have previously been described, are examples of such undertakings. They were probably carried out by small groups of warriors. Another sign of this activity in Akim is encountered immediately before the Ashanti invasion. At the war counsel of the three Akim rulers Ursue suggests that the population be moved to Crepe, while

> "the young Akim men should act as robbers of the Assiantees and trouble them, for so long that Oppoccu [the Ashanti ruler] would make peace with them. The Akims could then hope to weaken the Assiantees little by attacking one town after the other so that at least, if Oppoccu would not submit, they would be able to attack the Assiantees with their whole force".[66]

The above fragment indicates that it was an age group that constituted the cadre military organization, which is not uncommon among other Akan peoples.

Soon after the described events the Akim participated in a northwards expedition as 'allies' of the Ashanti. Since their forces were disproportionately small compared to the potential they had displayed so recently as well as a little later, it seems that it was these cadre units that took part.

The operation of an army calls for the existence of commanders of different levels. We are already aquainted with the information concerning the elders or nobles. They constituted the ruler's counsel, which advised him before he took a decision. They are known as "elders". We also meet with information about the 'generals' of Ursue. These persons may be connected with the "governing men" mentioned by Bosman, regardless of the change of their position within the political structures. It seems that they accompany the ruler at war, and die with him in case of defeat.

> "In the third big battle Ursue was killed by 25 mortal wounds... instead of removing his body so that his head should not fall into the hands of the enemies [Rømer knows this to

be the greates insult] all Ursue's old and great men killed themselves, and fell at his feet. ... Not only the old men of Ursue's countries killed themselves, but also from Bang's and Frempung's countries seeing this the Assiantees came and took Ursue's and nearly 7000 dead bodies. Thereupon Frempung successor fell almost in the same way... Bang, who had not received one wound, but can that is would not go well for him killed himself during the night. All his pot companions and the other elders followed suit; and thousand of them lay dead at his feet."[67]

Although the numbers of the dead are certainly exaggerated by the Ashanti who are proud of their victory, they suggest the existence of a very elaborate political elite and administrative apparatus.

The description of the war costumes of the Negroes provides further information:

> "Every distinguished negro has his strange sign, for example Putty has a horse-posterior, which he ties on to nearly the same place as the horse has had it, Soja takes a red cock... Like that everyone has his mark".[68]
>
> "A distinguished man has a sword at his side or carried after him: he makes use of it, when one of his enemies falls, to cut off his head in order to fix it to his drum as a sign of victory".[69]

The insygnia described above are also known from ethnographical descriptions. The first may be identified as the totemic signs of clans (stools). Those mentioned in the second fragment perhaps are the "afona" sword and the drum. Their significance is connected with the position their owner occupies in the state structure. The above piece of information is in fact much more important than it seems at first glance, as it proves that concrete institutions existed in Akim at the time. In traditional terms the real significance of an institution is embodied in the insygnia, not only represented by them[70]. Of course this should not be taken for granted, but the trace is certainly there, and it allows us to suppose that the chief institutions known from later periods originated at the time of the independent Akim of the first half of the 18th century, and

that their structures might be similar. Being recorded by Rømer as if unintentionally, the piece of information gains even greater significance.

Before we conclude our investigations of descriptions left by European observers we must return for a moment to the question of the sovereignty of the domains. The presented evidence indicates that all the three rulers governed separately, had their own elders, armies, incomes, and jurisdiction, completely independently of the others. We should therefore treat each of the districts as a fully independent and compact political organism. However, one problem seems to contradict this conjecture, namely that of succession. In the case of Frempung his nephew succeeded to the stool, and the context implies that he came from the same domain if not the immediate surroundings. This seems to confirm the conclusion about the independence of the domain. The succession to the stool of Bang, however, seems much more peculiar, for Rømer mentions Ursue as the expected successor. If we combine this with the apparently different organization of this domain in comparison with the other two, we can suppose that Rømer's account may refer to the domain of the successor to the stool which was formed mostly of the territories acquired from Akwamu. Our source does not contain the answer to the question of whether this was indeed the case, because after the war with the Ashanti a three-fold division of Akim had been established as far as succession of power is concerned, that is each of the fallen rulers got a different successor. Thus the successor of Ursue could not have also been the successor of Bang.

> "They [the Ashanti] had caught two of the Akim heirs to the throne namely Bruny, who belonged to Frempung's countries, and Ascharry, who came from Bang's throne. From Ursue's countries he did not get any nobility, but Pobby succeded Ursue. Oppoccu sent the message to the Akims that if they inthrone these two ... then he would deliver them to Akim free ...
>
> Although there were older and consequently closer heirs to Bang's and Frempung's thrones the Akims accepted this offer and the closer heirs had to resign the thrones to them."[71]

Thus, as a result of an interferrence on the part of the Ashanti, three separate segments were retained. We cannot

therefore state whether the domain of Ursue was a permanent or temporary creation. We are also not certain whether Pobby was a natural heir to the stool or whether he was a usurper who took advantage of the situation to gain power.

At the times of Rømer the Akim present a united front in external relations. They lead wars together, actions are planned together by the rulers, as in the case of the described war counsel. We do not know, however, whether this was a feature of the political system, a custom, or merely their own good will and conviction of the great advantage of this situation. In other words the source does not indicate whether we are dealing with a political unity or only an alliance.

In the beginning of the 18th century the picture presented by the sources is that of a lack of such unity, which was exploited by neighbours, more precisely Akwamu, for its own ends[72].

On the other hand its neighbours treat Akim as one unit.

"The Akim payed an annual tax to... the Assiantes."[73]

Similarly, in return for the period of freedom which enabled them to conquer Akwamu, the Akim were to deliver 500 slaves to the Ashanti ruler, irrespective of the division into domains[74]. This is also the case with the Akwamu, who were obliged to pay a tribute to the Akim (before 1730), and who do not pay it to the respective rulers but to Akim as a whole[75]. When Rømer describes a case of repulsion of the Akim tax collectors[76] he does not connect them with any of the domains, although the Akwamu rulers exploited the quarrels between the Akim, partly to circumvent the tribute.

It seems, therefore, that for the peoples of the Gold Coast Akim constituted a traditional political unit, a remnant from the period when it was undivided, that is before the end of the 17th century.

This state of affairs was probably customarily accepted even after the decline of the political organism of Akim, which meant that the rulers of respective segments were compelled to take their decisions together. It continued at least until the year 1742.

Notes

[1]Daaku 1964:11, Boahen 1967:70.

[2]Barbot 1746:189. The quoted fragments of Barbot's account are taken from two sources which contain large portions of his text: Donnan 1935 and Wolfson 1959. The fragments taken from the first of these have the pagination of the first, original edition (three digit page numbers) and are marked with the date 1746. The fragments from the second source are paginated according to Wolfson 1959 (two digit page numbers) and are marked as Barbot 1959.

[3]Bosman 1709:79.

[4]Barbot's earlier account (Barbot 1978) of his voyage in 1679-1680 does not contain any information about Akim.

[5]Bosman 1709:69, 78.

[6]Rømer 1965:2. One Danish mile equals approx. 4,5 English miles, that is about 7,25 kilometres. Of course it is quite improbable for Akim to have stretched over such distances. The case is a typical example of the use of numerical data in European sources.

[7]Rømer 1965:25 indirectly suggests the date 1733, which is also the date mentioned in many other early studies. However, after Wilks 1975 we accept the date <> 1730, which was established on the basis of the investigations of archives.

[8]Rømer 1965:20.

[9]Rømer 1965:24.

[10]Rømer 1965:20.

[11]Rømer 1965:42.

[12]Rømer 1965:26. This is a good opportunity to consider the problem of quantitative data provided by the sources. It must be noted that a tendency to overestate the actual numbers is common to the authors of all estimates. This is mainly due to the fact that the information does not come directly from the author, (although even in such cases we could have some doubts) but from informants on whose accounts he relied. In all probability Rømer (or any other author) did not receive the information in the same form as he relates it, but as a set of more or less impressionistic data, non-quantitative in nature. He had no access to more reliable sources of information (for instance the ruler, or the military officials must have had a more precise assessment of their military force) and he had to depend on the accounts of observers who only provide an external picture, and estimate the size of the army in the form of an impression rather than give concrete data. We should also remember that it is extremely difficult to access the number of people at a glance if we are looking large groups. Whether the ruler or any other

member of the ruling class would want to inform a European accurately about the size of his army is another question, and we should expect gross exaggeration here. Moreover, we should also take an account of emotional factors which influenced both the European author as well as the autochtonous informants.

We must also compare the size of the armies which the European observers could have seen on the coast with the ones raised by the states situated further inland. We agree that the latter were indeed larger, but not a hundred times so, as the data provided by the sources indicates.

The numbers quoted by the efficient British intelligence in relation to the size of the Ashanti army at the end of the 19th century do not exceed three thousand warriors per oman, and often they are below a thousand. The only exception is Kumasi, which had an army of 5-6 thousand (Wilks 1975:81). This seems to be closer to reality, despite the time distance, than the data provided by Rømer.

It must be remembered that the above data applies to the army in a narrower sense, the 'retinue', and not to the entire mobilization capacity. We shall return to this distinction further on.

[13]Rømer 1965:20.

[14]Ward 1966: Appendix I.

[15]Barbot 1959:71, 1746:287, Bosman 1709:79.

[16]Ward 1966: Appendix I.

[17]Rømer 1965:23.

[18]Rømer 1965:23.

[19]Rattray 1929:285-294, cf. similar situations found for instance in Europe in the Early Middle Ages.

[19a]Another important area of activity of ruler is maintaining contact with the ancestral spirits and other supernatural powers, but this sphere is completly beyond the field of observation of the European authors.

[20]Rømer 1965:24.

[21]We can quote here two laws attributed to Osei Tutu, the reforms of Opoku Ware, or the so called Kwadwoan Revolution.

[22]Rømer 1965:29.

[23]Rattray 1929:104.

[24]Bosman 1709:168, 171, 177, Rømer 1965:33, Barbot 1746.

[25]Rattray 1929:290-292. This instance may also be associated with the European Middle Ages.

[26]Rømer 1965:32.

[27]Rømer 1965:21, 23.

[28]Kea 1982:380.

[29]Rømer 1965:24.

[30]Rømer 1965:10.

[31]Wilks 1958, Kea 1982.

[32]Rømer 1965:25.

[33]Tilleman 1967:107 (qoted after Kea 1982:379).

[34]Rømer 1965:24.

[35]Rømer 1965:28.

[36]Barbot 1959:71, 1746:287, Bosman 1709:79.

[37]Rømer 1965:26.

[38]Terray 1983.

[39]Rømer 1965:28.

[40]Rattray 1929:34 states that the Ashanti used four other terms denoting various categories of slaves apart from the term 'akoa', all of which were translated by the Europeans as 'slave'.

[41]In the English edition of Rømer's study (1965:26) this fragment is not translated and goes as follows "thi hvad der skylles ved soe-Kanten, skeer gjerne, og saa mange jag har seet, af slavinder, som foedte i Akim". For this reason I quote the french translation, after Terray 1983:114.

[42]Kea 1983:375.

[43]Rømer 1965:21.

[44]The nature of African slavery is much discussed at present, cf. Miers & Kopytoff 1977, Watson 1980, Goody 1971, 1980.

[45]Rømer 1965:22.

[46]Rømer 1965:29.

[47]Rømer 1965:234.

[48]Barbot 1959:59.

[49]Barbot 1746:288.

[50]Bosman 1709:92-93.

[51]Rømer 1965:8 explains the term 'siccadings' as 'elder young men'.

[52]Bosman 1709:69.

[53]Rømer 1965:21 gives 22-23 carates compared to 17-18 in the previous period.

[54]Rømer 1965:22.

[55]Barbot 1959:72.

[56]Bosman 1709:69.

[57]Barbot 1959:72.

[58]Rømer 1965:22.

[59]Rømer 1965:21. This is a common interpretation among the Negroes, encountered not only on the Gold Coast.

[60]Rømer 1965:8.

[61]Rømer 1965:26.

[62]Rømer 1965:18-19.

[63]Rømer 1965:7, 18, 29-30.

[64]Bosman 1709:76.

[65]Bosman 1709:181.

[66]Rømer 1965:29.

[67]Rømer 1965:30.

[68]Rømer 1965:39-40.

[69]Rømer 1965:40.

[70]Rattray 1927, Antubam 1963.

[71]Rømer 1965:31-32.

[72]Barbot 1746:189, Bosman 1709:69.

[73]Rømer 1965:7. The sentence refers to a much earlier situation and the repulsion of the tribute, as follows from the context, took place much earlier than 1730.

[74]Rømer 1965:18.

[75]Rømer 1965:7, Barbot 1959:71-72, Bosman 1709:69.

[76]Rømer 1965:13.

Chapter III

THE HISTORY OF AKIM IN ORAL TRADITION

We shall begin our confrontation of the statements about Akim presented in European sources with native tradition by looking at the most concrete information. This consists of names of the Akim rulers mentioned by Rømer: Frempung and his heir Appau, Bang, Ursue, and their successors after the 1742 defeat, namely Brunny, Ascharry, and Pobby. We shall try to identify them with individuals presented by oral tradition.

The question of identification gives rise to another serious problem, namely we ought to establish the correspondence between Rømer's three-fold division of Akim with the division recorded by tradition, and particularly its relation to the 19th century situation, that is the existence of three aman of Akim: Abuakwa, Kotoku, and Bosume. It must be noted at the outset that the possibility of identifying one of Rømer's domains as Akim Bosume is rejected, as this oman was created by migrating groups at the end of the 18th century, that is later than the period of our interest.

Next we will deal with the treatment of Akim by its neighbours, especially Ashanti, and with the internal structure of the country.

The Adansi traditional accounts of the 1742 disaster contain the names of three defeated rulers ("three great caboceers"): Bra Nkate, Pobi Asumain, and Owusu Akim Tenten[1]. These seem to be the counterparts of the names Bang, Pobby, and Ursue. The phonetic similarity of the names is quite striking, but the information handed down by tradition only partly corresponds to what we already know. The presence of Pobi, who could be conveniently

identified with Rømer's Pobby, seems to be caused by some other factors. It would be logical to put Appau in his place, then we would have a full list of the three rulers who died in 1742.

A key to the mystery seems to be supplied by Rattray, who mentions three rulers in the same combination as the Adansi tradition, and refers to them as the chiefs of Akim Abuakwa who had been beaten by Ashanti. If we link this information to Rømer's account of Ursue (Owusu) as the expected successor of Bang (Bra NKate), we shall be able to view the list differently. It can now be seen as a list of defeated chiefs of the same family - throne, who were beaten by the Ashanti not necessarily at the same time. For if Owusu was to be the successor of Bra NKate, he must have belonged to the same clan and lineage (matrilinear). Tradition connects this family with a political unit which in time became (or already was) Akim Abuakwa, that is identifies it with the Asona clan which ruled there[2].

It should be noted that this interpretation assumes that both the rulers killed in 1742 (Bang and Ursue) belonged to the same political structure.

This interpretation is supported by the following account by Kumawu tradition:

> "He [Kwame Kyere, Kuwamu Hene] went with Opoku Ware to a war in Kibbi, and captured and killed the Queen Mother, Dokua, and her brother, Owusu Akyim Tententen".[3]

The war can be identified without difficulty, as we are well acquainted with the defeated Owusu, and the ruling Asantehene - Opoku Ware. However, it is interestingly located in "Kibbi". The name is immediately associated with Kyebi, the capital of Akim Abuakwa.

It must be stressed that in the above record Owusu is not referred to as the ruler, but as the brother of the Queen Mother. Admittedly, the Ohema was very often the sister of the ruler, but here the question is not resolved expresis verbis, so we cannot readily assume that he was the Abuakwahene at the time. Moreover, the term "war in Kibbi" may refer to the territory where the hostilities took place, and not limit the opponents only to Abuakwa. Nevertheless, the connection of Owusu with the Asona - Abuakwa throne seems beyond doubt.

As all evidence indicates that Bang and Ursue were somehow connected with the throne of Abuakwa, we could expect that Frempung occupied the Kotoku throne. Here the identification is simpler, although some degree of uncertainty does remain. Frempung seems to be the ideal equivalent of Frimpon Manso, a ruler mentioned in the Akim Kotoku tradition, although his fate is presented differently. In Rømer's account he maintains peaceful relations with the Ashanti, while tradition shows him as their sworn enemy. His death also has two versions. Rømer says that he died a natural death, while according to Akwamu tradition he was captured and lead before Opoku Ware, who put him to death[4]

However, due to the peculiar nature of tradition as a source of evidence this is not necessarily as serious a problem as would seem at first. Two different sources may contain a completely different characterization of one individual, and it can hardly be called uncommon, quite on the contrary. The same may be true of the presentation of events if they are not insignificant to tradition, and in this case we are dealing with a situation which certainly possesses an emotional aspect. For it is an account of a tribe's effective retaliation against the enemy, and collaboration with a valued ally.

In our opinion Akwamu tradition is falsified in this respect, and shows the intentions of the vanquished party which wants to avenge the defeats inflicted by the Akim, rather than the real course of events. It must be noted that in societies which preserve their history in the form of oral tradition the version handed down by the latter is often more important than the objective truth, for it cannot be confronted with any other source. Besides, we might be lead to believe that Rømer's information was not complete, as his informants from Kotoku could, for instance, conceal (or could themselves be unaware of) the connection between the death of Frempung and the actions of the hostile Akwamu.

Moreover, Rømer's information about Frempung's gold mines can also be associated with Kotoku, for that is where his gold came from. Atkinson claims that Kotoku tradition maintains that they were the only ones who possessed gold mines[5]. The great gold mine of Oweri, which shows signs of having been exploited from the

beginning of the 18th century[6], was also situated in the region controlled by Frempung. (In the subsequent period it lay in the territory known as Asante-Akyem, a newly created 'province' colonized by the Ashanti, which was cut out of the Akim borderland with the real Ashanti).

The list of Kotoku rulers from the clan of Agona also confirms the identity of Frempung as Frimpon Manso. It corresponds exactly to Rømer's account and mentions his successors - Apau and Broni (Appau and Brunny), where Broni is imposed by the Ashanti and referred to as a regent[7].

By comparing the elements of tradition with European sources, especially Rømer's descriptions which are our main source, we have thus obtained two principal 'blocks' within Akim, namely the domain of Frempung, which consisted of Kotoku (or its nucleus), and the 'block' of Bang and Ursue, connected with Abuakwa. The latter will be the main object of our inquiry due to the complex situation in that region.

Despite some suggestions about a mutual dependence between the domains of Bang and Ursue, Rømer's account indicates the existence of two practically separate and independent domains. On the other hand, tradition presents an exceptionally obscure picture. If we accept the existence of one throne at Abuakwa and compare the data with Rømer's information, we are faced with two kings ruling at the same time even if we assume that the three listed rulers were not defeated together, which is a proposition we are inclined to support.

However, the following problems still remain to be answered: the exact identification and localization of the domains, their mutual relations, the assumptions, reasons and purpose of the existence of two domains, and the results of this state of affairs regardless of whether it was deliberate, incidental, or superimposed.

Data referring to Akwapim can be of some value here. Akwapim is a political unit formed as a result of the rebellion and defeat of Akwamu in 1730. It exists to this day in the form of an oman organized along Akan lines, although its population is mostly of Guan not Akan origin. Wilks records that within a military group the nifa and benkum are Guans, while the adonten

and gyase are Akans, from Akwamu and Akim respectively. The elite of power on the other hand is exclusively Akan, which re-emphasizes the fact that the court, that is the gyase ohene, is based on the Akan population.

Rømer does inform us about a rebellion of the subjected population of Akwamu[8], but he does not mention the creation of a new state or the existence of Akwapim.

The fact that Akwapim tradition, collected at the end of the 19th century by Reindorf, connects the dynasty ruling there with the dynasty of Akim Abuakwa[9] is very interesting. From a scholarly point of view it is the only tradition of Akwapim, because Reindorf's findings exerted such an influence on traditionalists that from then on they have been repeated as tradition by the Akyeame from Akwapim[10]. According to Reindorf's tradition the Akwapim rulers are descended (in the female line) from Safori, the brother of the Abuakwahene, who was sent there as a leader of the detachments that were to help the rebellion. After a victorious war he created his own oman on the Akwapim territory. The local Guan population was organized along Akan lines and incorporated into the state, while the newcomers from Akim founded the capital, Akropong, and the city of Amanokrom[11].

If we combine the above evidence with the fact that Ursue was the successor of Bang and the lack of information about Akwapim, we can conclude that Ursue and Safori from Reindorf's account is the same person. We already know that according to the Akan laws of succession the brother was the closest heir, that Ursue's domain was situated, according to Rømer, in the same region as Akwapim, and that the Guan population, identified as the 'Mountain Negroes', was a part of it.

The incomplete independence of Akwapim is also pointed out in the following saying: Ofori nkoa Akuapem - wonsom bi, wonnan bi, wanso wonne won no, which means: the subjects of Ofori - the people of Akwapim,' do not serve anyone, are not subject to anyone, but are not independent[12].

This kind of dependence seems quite familiar and resembles situations where a territory is subjected to a higher 'sovereign' through its direct ruler. Practically all Akan political structures are organized along these lines. However, if we were

to accept the above hypothesis, the fact that such a district should be ruled by the heir to the throne seems quite peculiar. A similar system of 'dauphinate' functioned in Akwamu, where the successor had his own court and thus his own domain[13]. Hence another element of the impact of Akwamu patterns becomes apparent.

The question of the dependence of Akwapim on Akim Abuakwa has yet another aspect, which supports the identification of Ursue as the ruler of Akwapim. In Ashanti the throne of the adehye (the members of the ruling family, the 'princes'), and since the times of Osei Kwadwo precisely referred to as the throne of heir of the Asantehene, is also known as the throne of the akyempemhene[14], literally the throne of the ruler of Akwapim. This resembles the reception of the title of akwamuhene, which means the ruler of the Akwamu, and the deputy commander in chief in the Ashanti model of army organization.

With the 'dauphinate' model at the beginning, and the Ashanti akyempemhene at the end of the evolution process, it seems appropriate to accept the existence of an intermediate stage in the form of a dependence between Akim Abuakwa and Akwapim.

The question of the name of the ruler, on the other hand, causes serious difficulty. The word 'Ursue' appears to be an obvious corruption of the name Owusu, so we cannot easily give up the analogy. Especially as we know that at the time there existed a person of that name in the clan of Asona, the family of the Akim Abuakwa rulers, and his biography could be seen to match our data. The name Safori on the other hand can be associated with the name Ofori. Thus we seem to be faced with a problem that cannot be resolved.

However, some of Wilks' findings which we will quote here can throw a light on the mystery[15].

Wilks believes that Safori was an invention on the part of tradition, and tries to find other solutions. He calculated the average duration of each reign for the different Akwapim thrones (which, we must note, is a very risky method), and came to the conclusion that Safori-Ofori must have lived about a century earlier. He believes him to be the head of an earlier group of Akan settlers in Akwapim country. On the basis of archives he claims that in 1730 the name of the Akwapim ruler was Sakyiama

Tenten, and considers him to be the seventh or eighth successor of Ofori. Wilks explains the creation of the character of Sofori in tradition by the fusion of the information about 17th century Ofori, Sakyiama, and Ofori Dwa, another Akim leader who had been sent to help the Akwapim population in its rebellion against Akwamu. Since this was the time when a new type of political system was emerging in Akwapim, tradition placed the invented character at this particular moment.

Some of Wilks's conclusions, despite the unreliability of the method which places early Akan settlement in the 17th century, can be accepted. However, fresh evidence will cause a substantial modification in the suggested scheme. The most important element of Wilks's hypothesis for our purposes is the name if Sakyiama Tenten, which is quoted in the archival sources. We can easily notice that this is the deformed name of Owusu Akyim Tenten (ten), who has been mentioned in Ashanti tradition, and whom we are inclined to identify with Ursue. The clear similarity of two parts of the name, uncommon among Akan names, renders this interpretation quite plausible. It seems even more valid if we recall that Wilks, who first came across this name, does not associate it with Ursue or Owusu, and does not even suggest anything of the sort. In order to explain the mythical biography of Safori he introduces the character of Ofori Dwa. We can therefore rule out any possibility of his account being biased.

We can present yet another piece of evidence to prove that the domain of Ursue-Owusu is in fact the oman of Akwapim, ruled by Sakyiama Tenten.

It is a fairly common phenomenon in Akan ruling houses to include the name of the founder of the dynasty, or a prominent member, in the names of his successors or other descendants. The case of Osei Tutu and Opocu Ware in the ruling house of Ashanti is an example here. Among the known members of the adehye of Akwapim in the 19th century we find a character called Owusu Akyim, who died in 1844[16].

So how should the remaining elements of our construction be arranged?

It is difficult to say anything definite about the settlement of the Akan population in Akwapim before the year 1730, but we

are inclined to agree with Wilks that it existed, leaving aside the problem of when the settlers arrived for it is not the object of our investigations. It was probably centered around a local throne, which could have been founded by some Ofori. However, we do not believe that Sakyiama was his successor. It seems that a new throne had been created, which is strongly suggested by the establishment of the capital of Akropong as a new centre, whose tradition incorporated the information about the name (or names) of the leaders of previous settlers as part of a general tradition of the Akan presence in Akwapim. But fearing competition from the older stool, which could prove inconvenient for the unity of the new oman, we can expect that a formal ban on handing down tradition earlier than the creation of Akwapim in 1730 was introduced, and the house of Ofori was moved to the background. A similar practice of prohibiting earlier tradition is also known from Ashanti and other aman.

The subsequent fate of the house of Ofori is unknown. It seems unlikely, however, that the stool itself, or the family, was physically exterminated. As a result of loosing the tradition of supremacy it was probably assimilated and remained in the position of one of many stools of secondary importance.

However, it is also possible that Ofori was not the chief of the earlier Akan settlers in Akwapim, but was introduced into the tradition of this oman through the tradition of the rulers of Akim Abuakwa, from whom we believe Owusu Akyim to be descended. Ofori could have thus been a reception of the person of Ofori Panin, whom we will deal with in due course.

The possibility of a ban being introduced on tradition also explains the shift in time of the activity of Safori - Ofori. His name, which was incorporated by the tradition of a superior throne together with the information that he was the first ancestor, was then linked with the creation of the oman. Thus the entire tradition was as if 'moved' by a certain period of time. This seems even more probable if we remember that in tradition time is a very fluid category, even among the Akans. The process could not have taken place all at once, but we must bear in mind that we are calling on tradition handed down for nearly 150 years after the reign of Ursue - Owusu. It is very likely that such changes could have taken place over this time.

The identification of the domains described by Rømer runs as follows: Akim Kotoku (the domain of Frempung), Akim Abuakwa (the domain of Bang), and Akwapim (the domain of Ursue, which was to some degree dependent on Abuakwa)[17].

Having established the existence of two major segments within Akim in the period between 1730 and 1742, let us now try to trace the shape of this country at an earlier period.

Akim tradition mentions two predecessors of Frimpon and Bra NKate, namely Ofosu Apenten and Ofori Panin. Both of them are referred to as chiefs who arrived in Akim and who founded the Akim organization system. The migrations they lead took place at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries[18].

According to Kotoku tradition the house of Ofosu Apenten came from Denkyira, hence the superior stool of this section is known as Denkyira-Mmerayam. The migration was to have been caused by an argument with the ruler of Denkyira, a relative of Ofosu[19].

The stool of Ofori Panin was to originate from Adansi[20].

Ofosu Apenten was to have ruled until 1717, in which year he was killed in a war with the Ashanti, and Ofori Panin - till the turn of the twentieth and thirtieth of the 18th century (Wilks, 1958, and Atkinson, 1982, suggest the date 1727, while on the basis of Akwamu tradition Ward claims that the date was 1730. It seems highly unlikely as this was the year of the victory over Akwamu, and Ofori's successor is already on the scene. The interval of three years between his death and the Akim-Akwamu war is characteristic however, for Ward assumes that the latter event took place in 1733)[21].

We should not, however, infer from the above information that there already existed two separate segments in Akim at the time in question, for it would be much to early for that. Tradition, which strongly affirms these two characters (Kotoku - Ofosu Apenten, and Abuakwa - Ofori Panin) as some sort of 'Founding Fathers', is not a reliable source of evidence, for it belongs to aman existing at the time (and indeed, to this day). These aman were formed as a result of the processes described by tradition. It can easily be expected, therefore, that the role of their founders will be greatly exaggerated as an anticipation of the later importance of the stools of Kotoku and Abuakwahene. In

order to investigate the social organization of Akim in the beginning of the 18th century we should turn to the tradition of neighbouring states, especially that of Ashanti. The evidence will perhaps not be so rich in facts, but might be more objective (although not devoid of changes and intrusions of the same type, as well as for instance abundant in exaggerated accounts of the strength of the opponent).

Ashanti tradition contains information about Akim which is connected with the armed struggles that took place between them. The first known war with the Ashanti in which the Akim took part was a war with Denkyira. Bosman relates that:

> "...of the negroes of Akim only, who came to the assistance of the Dinkirans there were about 30 000 killed; besides that a great Caboceer of Akim with all his men were cut off".[22]

Neither the tradition of the segments of Ashanti nor Akim tradition give the name of the killed chieftain. The first perhaps due to concentration on the main enemy - Ntima Gyakari, the ruler of Denkyira, the latter may have wanted to conceal the defeat. The whole account, however, seems rather dubious, especially where the number of casualties is concerned. On the other hand the participation of the Akim in the war is confirmed by Kotoku tradition[23], as well as by the tradition of the Ashanti capital, which was written down in 1819 by Dupuis, a British envoy to Kumasi. Unfortunately, Dupuis relates the collected information in a greatly changed form, and the matter in question is dealt with only by quoting the above fragment of Bosman's account. Nonetheless, this indicates that the information received by the British consul was similar to Bosman's. We can therefore conclude that the Akim took part in the war, they suffered serious losses, which is natural enough for they were beaten, and that a chief of theirs had been killed.

Further information collected and written down by Dupuis states that the participation of the Akim in the war on the side of Denkyira caused a repressive invasion by the Ashanti, which resulted in a victory over Akim (Dupuis, or more precisely, his informants, treat Akim as a kingdom). A tributary dependence was also imposed[24].

The existence of the tribute is further confirmed by Rømer,

which makes the above information highly reliable, as his study, being written in Danish, was unknown in English speaking countries. Dupuis was in all probability not acquainted with it, for if he had been he would probably have mentioned it among his sources, as he does with other works ranging from Dapper to Bowdich.

The terms of the peace treaty are described in the following manner:

> "peace ... was granted upon the condition of his [the ruler of Akim] becoming a tributary, and defraying the expence of the war, by a present of two thousand bends of gold; for the fulfilment of which, two Akim caboceers of high rank, named Kakramesee and Adjumako, were compelled to take fetische, and deliver themselves up hostages on behalf of their sovereign"[25]

The above fragment creates a number of problems. The first of these is the existence of an individual referred to as the "King of Akim", the second - the hostages. The fact that Dupuis mentions a supreme ruler may be a result of his being acquainted with Bosman's account. The names of the hostages, on the other hand, are a clear element of tradition. At this point, however, we should call upon a broader context, and examine how this custom was practiced among the Akan peoples in general. Usually it was not high officials that were taken as hostages, but members of the ruling dynasty, and moreover, closely related to the Ohene, potential heirs to the stool. Osei Tutu, the later founder of the greatness of Ashanti, was a hostage of this type in Denkyira. The Ashanti themselves practiced a similar procedure, as the sources from Gyaman, Denkyira, Akwamu, or Akim in 1742 certify. We have already had the opportunity to present such cases. A hostage of this kind had a dual significance. He was a guarantee that the tribute would be paid, and created an opportunity for interfering in the internal affairs of the country, whether before or after his inthronement.

For these reasons it seems likely that the two "caboceers of high rank" could have also been the members of the ruling house of one or two of the principal thrones of the country.

There is yet another question that arises at this point, which we shall not be able to answer with any degree of certainty, namely whether the names quoted above can be associated with the

characters we already know. Adjumako seems to be a mystery that cannot be unraveled, but Kakramsee may be remotely associated with Ba Nkate, Ba Nkrante, or Bakwante, that is with Rømer's Bang, whose name had been so terribly deformed. We know from Rømer that he was a prisoner of the Ashanti:

> "Oppoccu [Opoku Ware], the Assiantees King, called Bang, the most important King in Akim, his slave, owing to the fact that during Bang's predecessor's reign, and during the war which took place between the Assiantees and the Akims, Bang (as a youngster) had been taken prisoner by the Assiantees, and Oppoccu had released him in exchange of a very small reward, namely 100 ounces of gold".[26]

We cannot state, however, whether the two can be identified. Bra Nkate could have already been alive in the beginning of the 18th century, but he must have been very young, almost a child. This, however, does not rule out the possibility of his being taken hostage. He could have been captured in 1717, during the war in which Osei Tutu and Ofosu Apenten died[27], although this conflict ended in the defeat of the Ashanti. It is also possible that tradition confused events and names connected with various wars. Moreover, cases of name changing are known, as well as the custom of using nick-names assumed later, so it is impossible to establish who the hostages were. The identification of Kakramsee as Bra Nkate must be considered very doubtful, as there exists to evidence to support it. The similarity between their names is very remote. Therefore, apart from voicing a supposition, we cannot arrive at any definite conclusions. Fortunately, it is not a question of primary importance.

The next war is relativelly well known due to the death of Osei Tutu in an ambush. The event is commemorated in the most ceremonial oath of the Ashanti, the Memenda ne Kromante[28]. Tradition, written down by Dupuis, describes the death of the Asantehene and retaliation in the form of looting Kromante (Accromante), but does not mention Akim. It only relates that on its way back the army took prisoners who were then put to death during symbolic funerary celebrations[29].

Tradition of the aman of Ashanti contains more information on the subject.

The tradition of Asumeegua gives an account of its own omanhene, Gyebi Kofi:

"He accompanied Osai Tutu to the war against AKyem Hene, Fusu Apenten. In this war the Ashanti King was killed, and the Asumegya suffered heavily".[30]

The Mampon had also remembered the name of Fusu Apenten:

"Akuamoa Panyin [Mamponhene] went with Osai Tutu to the war against Akyim Abuakwa, in which Osai Tutu died or was killed. Akuamoa Panyin brought back the army after Osai Tutu's death and received in consequence the title of Odi Nwisa Hene".[31]

Under the command of Opoku Ware Akuamoa also took part in a "second war against Akyim, when Fusu Apenten was killed".[32]

The above traditional accounts seem curiously confused. Fusu Apenten is undoubtedly Ofusu Apenten, member of the Denkyira Mmerrayam family, who was later to rule Kotoku. Mampon tradition, however, states that it was a war against Akim Abuakwa. We can assume that the term 'Abuakwa' was a later addition and an erroneous attempt to complete the traditional account, which is probably the case. But it may also be a trace of treating Akim as one unit.

The fact that Ofosu Apenten is referred to as Akyem Hene is also interesting. Akyem Hene means the ruler of all Akim. On the other hand Kotoku is situated closest to Ashanti, so the ruler of that region was naturally better known to them. They may therefore have assumed that he wielded power over the whole country.

It does not seem likely that the Ashanti went to war against the individual fragments of Akim. Abuakwa tradition also mentions participation in a war in which Osei Tutu was killed[33]. Without finally concluding the case for the time being we can state with certainty that Ofosu Apenten held a significant position, and even Ashanti tradition confirms that he was a powerful chief. We must note, however, that it is highly improbable that his was the superior throne (the royal throne, as Bosman would have called it), for, as we have already established, he arrived in Akim at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries, while information about the existence of one superior ruler refer to an earlier period, before Bosman. At the most he could have taken over some of the

functions of the sovereign in a particular area, and become independent.

None of the known Ashanti traditional accounts mention the person of Ofori Panin. On the one hand his domain was situated further away and did not come into direct contact with the Ashanti, on the other, he may not have been involved in these conflicts but in the invasions of Akwamu. But before we deal with him in more detail, let us complete our investigations of Ashanti tradition regarding the wars.

The 1717 war probably resulted in throwing off the tributary dependence. Rømer informs us about this taking place before 1730, although he does not indicate that it was connected with a war that could be identified with the one mentioned above[34]. It is possible therefore that there was yet another conflict, although this does not seem very likely.

The next was the war of 1742. Both, Rømer and Dupuis[35], describe the same conditions of peace, that is no imposition of tribute but a free access to the shore and transferrence of the "notes", the documents which guaranteed taxes from the European forts. We can therefore conclude that no tribute was paid in the period immediately preceding the war.

Returning now to Ofori Panin, we are faced with the question of his role within the Akim organization. Due to the high position of his family in the first half of the 18th century it seems possible that his was the superior stool. However, the early history of this family seems to disprove it, for both, Akwamu and Abuakwa traditions state that it originated from Adansi. Moreover, Akwamu tradition notes that he received land from the Akwamuhene. The region where these lands were located corresponds roughly to the later centre of Akim Abuakwa, suggesting that the piece of information is more or less accurate. However, in view of this it seems highly improbable that this was the throne which ruled Akim in the 17th century.

Thus neither of the lineages, Agona - of Ofosu Apenten, and Asona - of Ofori Panin, seem to have been connected with the early rulers of Akim.

We can also rule out the possibility of the lineages of the rulers of Kotoku or Abuakwa being in some way indirectly

connected with them. This kind of kinship, if it existed, would have certainly been recorded by tradition as a matter of great prestige, like the tradition of the affiliation between the Kotokuhene and the ruling house of Denkyira. We must therefore seek the 17th century Akimhene, who were still known to Bosman, elsewhere.

Abuakwa tradition seems to suggest a way of solving our problem. It notes that before the arrival of Ofori Panin there already existed a settlement structure in Akim, and it was governed by a man with the non-Akan sounding name of Kuntunkrunku. But because Ofori Panin proved to be a man of great wisdom and justice he was chosen to be his successor and the ruler of the growing Akim[36]. Although this is a remote association, it seems nonetheless to be a trace of the situation described by Bosman in a fragment quoted in the beginning of the present section of our study[37]. It seems to be a reversion of the previous account. Bosman wrote about a bad ruler whose power was limited, here the good features of Ofori Panin thanks to which he replaced the previous ruler are emphasized. In all probability he did not take over the previous throne, but placed his own above it. Ofosu Apenten might have arrived at this point, providing another factor which could have weakened the position of Kuntunkrunku. His name also suggests that the region was inhabited by a population older than the Akans, which merged with the new structures like we have seen the Akwapim do. Of course the process of the mingling of the two populations could have been well advanced by the time of the arrival of Ofori Panin, and the activity of the 'founding father' of the Abuakwa could have come at the highest point of the changes.

The subsequent fate of the house of Kuntunkrunku is unknown. It is possible that its power was reduced to a local significance, or that it died out. Some connection between his disappearance and the death of a chief in a war of about 1700 is also possible. But these are only hypotheses, and cannot be supported by evidence.

In view of this it is clear why tradition referring to the older Akim was not kept up. It was not the tradition of Kotoku or Abuakwa, and its existence could have endangered the position of

the ruling Amanhene. A formal ban may have even been introduced here. For this reason the Kotoku and Abuakwahene had to seek legitimization elsewhere, in Denkyira, or directly in Adansi, the cradle of the Akans.

Notes

[1]Rattray 1927:132.

[2]Atkinson 1980:354.

[3]Rattray 1929:220.

[4]Ward 1966:124.

[5]Atkinson 1980:356, tradition collected by the Institute of African Studies, Legon, in 1966, further referred to as IAS.

[6]Wilks 1975:436.

[7]Atkinson 1980:364 (IAS).

[8]Rømer 1965:18.

[9]Reindorf 1895:93; Ward 1966:114.

[10]Wilks 1964:392.

[11]Reindorf 1895:92-95.

[12]quoted after Wilks 1964:403.

[13]Kea 1980:374.

[14]Wilks 1975:333, 354.

[15]Wilks 1964:406-407.

[16]Wilks 1975:134-135, 210.

[17]Our conclusion differs from what is found in the literature. Fynn 1981:75 believes that Pobi was the successor of Bra NKate (Bakwante), while Atkinson 1982 claims that the domain of Owusu became the nucleus of Akim Abuakwa, and the domain of Bra NKate disappeared.

[18]Ward 1966:109-10.

[19]Ward 1966:109, Atkinson 1982:353, Field 1970:3.

[20]Ward 1966:109.

[21]Wilks 1958, Atkinson 1982, Ward 1966.

[22]Bosman 1709:76.

[23]Ward 1966:124.

[24]Dupuis 1824:231.

[25]Dupuis 1824:231.

[26]Rømer 1965:23.

[27]Boahen 1965, Priestley & Wilks 1960.

[28]Boahen 1965, Priestley & Wilks 1960.

[29]Dupuis 1824:232-233.

[30]Rattray 1929:132.

[31]Rattray 1929:237.

[32]Rattray 1929:237.

[33]Ward 1966:124.

[34]Rømer 1965:7.

[35]Rømer 1965:31, Dupuis 1824:234.

[36]Ward 1966:109.

[37]Bosman 1709:78.

Chapter IV

CONCLUSIONS - STRUCTURES AND THEIR TRANSFORMATION

In our investigations of the different types of sources we have seen that none of them present a dynamic process. However, an attempt at reconstructing such a process can be made on the basis of a comparison of evidence.

Both, tradition and European descriptions, are mainly interested in political history. Traditions we have called upon in chapter 4, being in a sense dynastic histories of thrones[1], provide a vision of history as seen from the point of view of a clan, and tend to present the social structure in the same terms (although it seems to be of little concern), that is as a fairly static system dominated by kinship institutions. This static approach enables us to note changes in the social structures, but not to locate them at definite points of time. Even in cases where such a temporal location is provided, it corresponds to a moment significant for tradition and has little to do with our European understanding of time and reality. Hence it is impossible to combine the information in a manner that would reflect a process of change, but only to note a series of facts that are arranged in a certain order, but according to a completely different framework. In cases when tradition does not record a change in the nature of a social organization but only notes its existence as if unintentionally, apart from noting the piece of information we cannot even approximate its location on the time axis. The above reservations are equally valid for the analysis of institutions, which is for the most part based on traditions connected with them.

European sources similarly neglect the development of African

communities, but with the exception of compilations and repetitions of information from other texts, either earlier or considered more authoritative, they usually describe the contemporary situation. Thus, by comparing various texts from various points of time, we are able to establish some chronological order.

It is now time to turn to the main object of our investigations, the social structures and their transformations. We shall begin with an examination of the principal factors which shaped the political structures of the Akim.

In the course of our analysis of sources we have been using the name 'Akim' to denote the population of Akim, which is a term found in 18th century European texts. The first and most obvious reading of the information conveyed by this term would be that the inhabitants Akim were a relatively homogenous tribal community, which used this name in relation to itself. This interpretation, however, contains a very serious oversimplification. It is suggested by sources the authors of which believe that the principal form of a state-like organization is based on an ethnic uniformity within it. Hence the mechanical use of the name of an organization or country to denote its inhabitants, which is a kind of short-cut. This does not indicate a total identification of the concepts of political and ethnic structure. For instance the sources often notice that a conquered people is in some way different from the victors even when there are no major ethnic or racial differences between the two groups, but this occurs only when the author knows about the invasion. When the source is unaware of the fusion of two (or more) groups, it is inclined to treat a given community as an organic whole.

'Akim' is not the name by which the inhabitants of this country refer to themselves. We know that they called themselves by a different name, 'Akenistes'[2], which should probably be understood as Akans. The fact that this name refers to more than just the inhabitants of Akim leads to two significant conclusions.

In our opinion Akim is the name of a country or a political organization, and not of a people.

The population of Akim defined its ethnic identity through a

broader concept, common to all its members, for a narrower concept did not exist. Thus Akim was not created on the basis of an earlier ethnic uniformity or tribal organization.

The second conclusion seems to be confirmed by the different places of origin of the Akim segments, not only Kotoku and Abuakwa, but also smaller units within them.

The self-definition of the inhabitants of Akim as Akans could not have been the foundation for forming a political structure based on this determinant. Apart from them, in close vicinity, there lived on the Gold Coast a population many times more numerous which could also call itself by the same name. The consciousness of Akan origins, as a factor that distinguished the group from non-Akans, could have played a significant role in the later stages of the development of the Akim community, but it was not a term which unified the group in the beginning of its formation. It did not segregate it sufficiently from the 'rest of the world'.

To a certain degree our conclusion does contain a limiting factor, which, at the time of the formation of Akim, acted on those population groups which later became its inhabitants. This excluded all non-Akan element. However, this factor does not seem to be of primary importance, for it defines the boundaries as if an the other side, while a clear means of establishing separateness from the other Akans seems to be lacking.

The ease with which the Akwamu population was assimilated after the conquest is also worth noting, as it indicates that is was an ethnically Akan system, but relatively open within this framework. The situation of the non-Akan population on the other hand could have been diverse. The Guan peoples were incorporated into the Akan state model, which we have seen on the example of Akwapim, while the Ga peoples, ethnically and culturally more distant, had to be excluded.

Coming back to the beginnings of the formation of Akim, we have to state that the principal factors which determined the shape of the Akan organization should be sought elsewhere. Our attention is automatically drawn to its contacts with the expansive state of Akwamu.

It seems quite logical that the basic factor which caused the

formation of early state structures in Akim was a reaction to the vicinity of the powerful Akwamu state, in whose immediate neighbourhood, and probably to some extent on whose territory, the Akan settlers found themselves. Information about the nature of relations between Akwamu and its neighbours, with the former organizing frequent raids to capture slaves who were then sold in great numbers in Accra, indicate that such self-defense was understandable.

Another reason for the formation of state structures in Akim could have been the attempt to dominate the gold bearing area situated on the banks of the river Birrim, and perhaps to establish some form of control over the output of the mines.

A third factor could have been provided by the will to participate in trade with the coast, for all trade routes leaving Accra lead through Akim territory.

All the factors described above are purely hypothetical in nature, for the period they refer to lacks record in almost all sources.

The three factors are interdependent. In our opinion however, the first of these played the greatest role in the initial stages of the formation of political structures in Akim. If pressure from Akwamu had been ignored by the Akim, all the other motives for development would practically lose their significance, for Akim would have been degraded to the role of a slave providing subsidiary, exploited by constant raids.

This seems not to have been the case, which is confirmed by relatively early European descriptions recording a rivalry in the eastern part of the Gold Coast.

An answer in the form of resistance on the part of the Akim came, as we have seen, relatively quickly. It was not only a result of the vitality of this society, which in any case seems beyond doubt. At the time of the formation of Akim there already existed other Akan states, which must have suggested at least the possibility of such a solution, if not the adoption of a certain pattern, which we shall try to prove later on.

The strife to control gold mining and actively participate in trade with the coast (that is with European merchants) could have appeared only as secondary motives, for they were the aspirations

of an organized state and not of a relatively loose, segmental structure, which can hardly be said to possess any concrete aims due to the absence of a power elite similar to that of a state. Only a state elite could represent this policy, for one connected with kinship structures could not have had such far reaching ambitions. However, these factors should not be dismissed altogether, especially as far as the slave trade is concerned, for the latter probably constituted the main source of income and the reason for the existence of a militarized power elite in early Akim, especially as the turnover in Transatlantic trade grew substantially in the last decades of the 17th century[3]. This could not but influence the functioning of Akim at the time. However, we immediately note that in the period observed by Rømer, and to his great surprise, this procedure was abandoned, that is it did not become the foundation of the existence of Akim, whose rulers traded mainly in gold.

Let us now try to define the character and origins of the early Akim state. The key will be provided by the traditional social institutions of the Akans.

Tradition presents the population movements as migrations of thrones. The stools belonged to matrilinear groups, but is seems highly probable that apart from these, groups belonging to other clans also took part in the migrations. This was due to the practice of exogamy, as well as the fact that Akan stools came from already existing aman, in which structures other than kinship also functioned.

The most important moment (or process, for we are not dealing with a momentary phenomenon) must have been the shift in the significance of the stool - from its power over one clan only, to power over members of other clans as well. This type of change could have been connected with settlement, due to the already known institution of clan, and therefore stool, of the first settlers, who held a position of supremacy over the others. A similar effect would be achieved if we assumed that the migratory groups belonging to various clans were lead by one particular throne. Tradition of the governing stools of Akim Abuakwa and Kotoku seems to render this quite plausible, for it refers to locations highly esteemed in Akan culture, and emphasizes the

important position these stools already held there. Moreover, the two manners of gaining supremacy by a stool in the early stages of the formation of a society are not mutually exclusive.

We know nothing about the details of the process, which took place at the end of the 17th century. We only know that these were not the migrations of an internally consolidated people but of loose groups, which had to establish their unity only once they settled. It did not occur without major obstacles, which lead at one point to the loss of this unity. We also know the outcome of this process. It was the emergence of what looked in the eyes of European observers like a 'Kingdom', that is at a certain point one of the stools gained such superiority that others became subservient. We do not know whether it was at this point that a new type of organization was achieved, especially as far as the internal structure is concerned. It would be more likely that the nature of the basic social structures of the emerging state did not change, and the foundation of the new unity lay in establishing another level of organization over the already existing ones, which, however, did not differ from them in character. But this is only one side of the problem, for it must have lead to a change in military organization as well. The loose local retinues had to be united to form an institution which could encompass the whole of AKim, which, as we know, was one of the main principles according to which the AKan aman was organized. If our hypothesis about the decisive role of the influence of AKwamu was to be true its effectiveness must have been the chief result of the unification.

The military organization of the AKan aman has already been described. The "governing men" described in the European sources as occupants of subordinate stools may, in our opinion, be connected with it as a reflection of the model at this level.

Assuming that the AKan army was principally divided into three parts, the nifa, benkum, and adonten, Atkinson explains the three-fold division of AKim which is described by Rømer[4]. In our opinion, however, his interpretation is insufficient. He is correct in liking the genealogies of the rulers of Abuakwa and Kotoku with the members of the counsel of elders - the military officials of early AKim, but he does not explain what happened to

the third oman, and, moreover, he places the final formation of Akim Abuakwa and Kotoku at the end of the 18th century. This seems rather improbable as the development of Akim at this time was arrested by the fact that it was a part of the state of Ashanti. The conquest by Ashanti did not cut short the continuity of the existence of Akim, but it strengthened the three-fold division which was in force at the time of the conquest. This division was maintained in the form of 'vasal-like' provinces within a greater body - the empire. This is an established method of solving political problems among the Akans. We should also note that the Ashanti could hardly have had a reason for restoring their previous unity to the Akim, quite on the contrary. Similarly, maintaining already existing structures conformed with the logic and practice in such situations, as long as it was possible and did not pose a serious threat. For these reasons we are inclined to believe that the influence of Ashanti was conservative in nature, and that the two principal aman of Akim already existed in the first decades of the 18th century, although some relics of the previous unity may have still been alive.

Let us return however to the initial stages of the formation of Akim. The connection between the thrones of Abuakwa and Kotoku and the military - administrative dignitaries of early Akim seems beyond doubt. It is further confirmed by the fact that neighbouring states treated Akim as one unit, and that the domains waged wars together at a time when their separateness is clearly noticable. The above explanation seems to correspond to the manner in which the Akim armies were arranged for battles, some of which had been recorded by tradition.

On the other hand we should be wary of treating the three-fold division of the Akan army into the nifa, adonten, and benkum too strictly. It refers more to a type of internal organization rather than a purely external system of arranging the army. The latter could have a number of more or less elaborate variants.

We cannot state with any degree of certainty whether in the 17th century the Akan army was already organized along these lines. It appears fairly likely, for the nifa, adonten and benkum constitute the main body of the army, without which the remaining

parts, such as the Kyidom or ankobea, would be inconceivable. It is therefore the simplest system, which nonetheless does not indicate that it existed in early Akim. The young age of a state does not necessitate a lack of 'horizontal' structure. However, proving the three-fold division of the Akim army in the 17th century is not vital for our considerations if we have decided to accept Akwapim as the third of Rømer's domains. From the very formation of Akwapim, concepts relating to the three basic segments of the army (together with the gyase) became the foundations for its internal organization, which we have already described. This may indicate that the system had been well known before the time in question, and even that it was deeply rooted in Akan culture if Owusu Akyim Tenten introduced it in a newly created political organism, and went so far as to impose it on a non-Akan population, to which it must have certainly been somewhat alien.

The origin of the Akan military system is usually associated with Denkyira, so is possible that it reached Akim through the throne of Denkyira Mmerayam. However, due to the complete lack of evidence either supporting or contradicting this claim the problem remains unresolved, for we can easily imagine various other ways through which the system might have been adopted.

As we have seen the central government of 17th century Akim proved unstable, it was destroyed, the results of which are well known to us. Bosman seems to suggest that stools other than Abuakwa and Kotoku also took part in this process.

Regardless of the strength the above model of political organization could have displayed in relations with other states, which seems to be confirmed by the Akim victories over Akwamu and Ashanti both before and after the 'revolution' of the beginning of the 18th century, the fact that the internal structures of the state were primarily based on military institutions nevertheless spelled instability. After a balance in relations with Akwamu had been achieved the chief factor which united the population groups became less urgent, and moreover, despite the decentralizing tendencies Akim remained a major power in the eastern part of the Gold Coast. On the other hand, however, the creation of a central government must have resulted in the growing ambitions of the members of particular thrones, as well as in an attempt to take

advantage of the possibilities created by central power. It is at this point that we are probably dealing with the creation of a power base other than that founded on purely military models. The most significant prerogatives of the ruler would therefore be the ones that guarantee him a position higher than that of his subjects, even the most powerful ones. Another group of features which may indicate a qualitative change in the structure of the political bodies of Akim is connected with the possible changes in the economic foundations of power. The above division into two groups is of course purely arbitrary, for both relate to the same problem. The only difference is that the first defines changes in the system of concepts connected with traditional culture, the other - in analytical, European terms.

As we know the basic prerogatives of the ruler are the organization of a tax system, and a system of justice connected with the ruler, that is, in other words, what constitutes an administration on this level of development of state structures. Both these spheres require the creation of a special apparatus which would enable them to function.

The origins of the Akim treasury should in our opinion be sought in the organization of the ruler's own domain. Suggestions on the matter supplied by European sources are for the most part confirmed by ethnographical data. The reception of the Akwamu model, if not in its entirety then at least in principle, seems to have played a formative role in the development of this sphere of government in Akim. This is particularly clear in Akwapim, which we believe to be identical with "the domain of Ursue", where the Gyase (like military units) constituted a separate unit and possessed its own domain. If combined with Rømer's suggestions this in effect provides a picture of the development of a fiscal apparatus. The other regions of Akim on the other hand, which did not incorporate the territories (and, what may be more significant in African circumstances, the population) of Akwamu, seem to be more backward in this respect.

Information about the tribute the Akim payed to the Ashanti in the beginning of the 18th century throws some light on the functioning of the financial system in Akim. The value of this tribute being unspecified, it could exert a certain influence on

the development of the financial apparatus. On the other hand the repulsion of the tribute, which took place together with a temporary displacement of abodes, could also indicate a reduction in the Akim apparatus which serviced it. In 1742 the Ashanti do not impose a tribute on Akim Abuakwa and Kotoku, but do so with respect to Akwamu. We know that the latter possessed the institution of gyase, but we cannot conclude that the fact that Abuakwa and Kotoku were not burdened with a payment was due to the lack of an apparatus which could collect it. This problem seems to have been related to the degree of integration of the provinces with the Ashanti empire. It is only the 19th century that brings definite information about the fiscal system of Akim. At that time the aman of Akim did not pay a tribute to the Ashanti, but were taxed according to the system of that state - "by crooms"[5], which indicates a high degree of integration into the state organization. However, this information applies to the period after the so called "Kwadwoan revolution", which brought about great changes in the whole social system of Ashanti[6].

The process of monopolizing the judiciary cannot unfortunately be observed through the sources. The fact that it did take place is only indicated by incidental notes and information relating to a later period, when the legislative system was already well formed (that is in the period of the Ashanti domination).

The creation of his own economic base also strengthened the position of the ruler. This was probably done by means of an evolution from a purely traditional economy to one based on slave labour.

The very location of Akim, on one of the two main routes connecting Ashanti with the Coast, must also have awakened the mercantile ambitions of the elite. Although we cannot claim that this gave rise to a mediation in trade between the Coast and the interior, we can certainly state that it applied to the trade of Akim itself. This was also the natural consequence of the 17th century conflicts with Akwamu, but as we have seen the nature of the merchandise changed.

It seems therefore that we can speak of a certain consolidation of the system that emerged, independently of the later impact of Ashanti.

In the last period of the existence of the independent Akim we are dealing with three entirely separate centres of power, with different system of organization and different modes of functioning.

The mass suicides of the "great men", which, as Romer describes, took place at the time of the final defeat by the Ashanti in 1742, also indicate that the connection between the administrative apparatus and the ruler was well established. The officials could not conceive that they could find themselves in a new situation, that they could look for new positions under different circumstances, based on pre-state structures, which had not been destroyed and in which their own thrones played important roles. The downfall of state institutions, in which each of them played a major part and which probably guaranteed a position much higher than in the previous structures, was for them equivalent to death.

Not all of them of course took to this solution, but the mass scale of the suicides was visible even to a white observer. What is perhaps even more important, despite the disaster and the physical elimination of the elite the system did not disintegrate. The stools taken over by the successors of the dead chieftains, regardless of whether the latter were chosen by the local elders or appointed by the Asantehene, retained their position within the same structures, only now they were under the supremacy of the Ashanti. The manner in which the Ashanti nominated the successors to the stool is particularly interesting. They were not the closest in line of succession, so that they could owe their elevation to the Asantehene, but at the same time they were legitimate heirs, so that they were acceptable to the Akim without the necessity of disturbing their social order.

We have already mentioned the preserving impact of the Ashanti many times. We cannot determine, however, to what extent this was a decisive factor in establishing the three-fold division of Akim. If the conquest had not taken place, it is highly probable that we would also be faced with a divided Akim. The only exception here may be the case of Akwapim, which we are inclined to see as a domain connected with the ruler of Abuakwa, perhaps the domain of the heir to the stool. The outcome of the Ashanti

conquest, however, reveals a feature of Akim system which is much more significant than the formal political situation, namely that it was consolidated and developed to such a degree that it could be (or had to be) retained by the Ashanti.

It is also necessary to remark on the nature of the processes we have been investigating. Our attention is drawn primarily by the speed with which the Akan political structures developed. The Akans reached the Gold Coast relatively late, settlers continued arriving in Akim throughout the 17th century, while in the beginning of the 18th century we can already observe relatively well developed and still evolving political structures.

It is difficult to evaluate the processes which took place in the period of our interest. Some of them, although not complete by the time of the 1742 defeat, could have turned out to be blind alleys. Others contained elements which could have, in due course, yielded completely different results. In general however, they constitute the possible variants of the model of Akan statehood. A characteristic feature of this model is found not in concrete solutions to particular problems, but in the fact that its development was based on the institution of stools, the role of which gradually evolved. Thus institutions which originated in pre-state structures were given a qualitatively new significance.

We should also be wary of seeing the development of Akim as a smooth process. On the contrary, it abounded in sudden jerks, and did not lack regressive tendencies, which even gained domination at certain points. The segmental nature of a unit based on kinship structures, not so much on political ones, was never wholly abandoned in Akim, as in the other Akan aman, or even in the state of Ashanti. This is clearly visible at a time of crisis of the new structures, which certainly came with the war with the Ashanti that ended in disaster. The Akim abandon their homes, which seems almost like a return to the starting point. However, soon new elements emerge. A growing importance of the bond between the ruler and his subject chiefs, who in fact represent entirely new institutions, is clearly visible. The abandonement of homes also proves to be temporary.

In our opinion in the 17th century the process of development was mainly based on population growth, which was due to the

arrival of new groups of people as well as an expansion of those already settled. Some sort of political organizations must have been formed in those early days, although it seems unlikely that they could have contained any qualitatively new elements. Due to a lack of earlier evidence this claim is chiefly based on the observation of AKim in the 18th century. However, the existence of institutions characteristic of early statehood on the highest levels of organization indicates that in the 17th century the structure of this society did not undergo a major (or permanent) transformation (this seems a plausible claim, although we cannot exclude the possibility of a change which was followed by regression, which nonetheless appears unlikely). The 18th century, on the other hand, abounds in this type of phenomena, especially with respect to the creation of the military and administrative systems, as well as the economic base. The fact that changes in these spheres occured ex post in relation to the formation of an early state structure is of primary importance to us. It suggests that they were seen as means of retaining a state of affairs which was achieved thanks to the military organization, which in turn was shaped by external circumstances. They did not themselves constitute the foundations for the formation of early state structures.

What then were the reasons for re-organizing AKim in the 18th century?

The creation of a state is not an automatic or accidental process which occurs under a fixed set of circumstances. It is primarily a result of a conscious attempt to bring about changes, and the awareness of the purpose of these changes is a necessity. Such an understanding of the process of the creation of a state calls for a definition of the goals which it is supposed to serve. This has already been presented with respect to the beginnings of AKim. But we still have to find the causes of the transformations which took place at the end of the independent existence of AKim.

First and foremost, the development of settlement, for which the traditional structures proved insufficient, must have played a significant role.

The sources do not contain a description of the forms of

traditional economy in the period of our interest, but it seems unlikely that any major change in this field took place in the first decades of the 18th century. The traditional model of AKan agriculture, based on the extended family, exists in many regions of the Gold Coast to this day, and it is well known to give such small surplus[7] that it is difficult to suppose that its development could have been the reason for the integration of AKim and the creation of political structures in the 17th century, and subsequently for the transformation of these structures in the 18th century. Moreover, the transformation seems to have been largely connected with the search of a new economic base for an existing system that was not very stable. The result was a trend towards the creation of new sources of income for the rulers, (as well as, directly or indirectly, for other members of the ruling class) based on new principles, that is slave labour rather than on family ties. This is further confirmed by the evolution of the fiscal system, the fact that it was modeled on the chief's own domain. We could conclude therefore that the economy based on traditional agriculture proved to be the weak point, and that it was unable to provide for the needs of the new political structures and to satisfy their ambitions.

However, finding one cause for the changes does not prove that it was the sole cause. Two further groups of possible factors seem to be relevant here, the first connected with the political situation, the second with the trade with European merchants.

In the 18th century Akwamu was no longer a major threat to AKim, the sources seem to be suggesting a kind of status quo which remained stable for a long period of time. Besides, we know that AKim was capable of putting up a firm resistance even when divided, and that in the end it brought about the defeat of Akwamu. On the other hand, since the turn of the 17th and 18th century the state of Ashanti was developing in the hinterland, and it seems to have been a well recognized threat, especially if we recall the location of AKim on one of the two routes leading from Ashanti towards the sea coast, which was the direction of its expansion. This is particularly visible through tradition which records the consecutive conflicts between the two countries which went on from the very beginning.

On the other hand, the tendency to elevate the rank of stools seems to draw our attention to the fact that the position of the sovereign ruler must have been very attractive from a wider point of view than that of the traditional system. This growth of aspirations could have been caused by the arrival of new groups of settlers, where rivalry and interdependence must have been an important factor, as well as the strife to control, or at least actively participate, in the trade in European goods, and other spheres connected with it. This was especially manifest before Akim had achieved access to the coast which had been blocked by Akwamu, and, moreover, it was undoubtedly the principal reason for the conquest of Akwamu as well as the political division of Akim. However this factor was present in what we termed the early phase, indeed, it was its last manifestation. After the conquest of Akwamu the situation changed. It was then that the new possibilities which were later exploited by Akim appeared, and the model supplied by the conquered state also played an important role.

The changes which ensued could have gone in different directions in the two main segments of Akim. The south-east was chiefly interested in the Akwamu heritage and the coast, while the north-west - in the interior and relations with the Ashanti. If this was indeed the case, the division of Akim did not have to be connected solely with the freeze up of the political situation due to the interference of the Ashanti. We can also suppose, although evidence is more than scant here, that the economies of the two segments differed. Abuakwa (and Akwapim, which was connected with it) developed and reshaped its agriculture based on slave labour, while Kotoku was more orientated towards gold mining. There is no way of determining whether this was indeed the case, but it is clear that both these trends (if they were separate) required a halt in the mass exportation of slaves, who were now used in a different manner. This is a major qualitative difference in comparison with the previous system.

The structure of Akim was thus greatly transformed, while at the same time retaining a formally unchanged system based on the military framework. From an early state structure, which was created primarily with the purpose of self-defense and depended

on external sources of income, Akim went through a series of internal changes which lead to the formation of a fully developed state. The process was not completed, but this was not caused by the nature of these changes. Their direction, especially in the sphere of the formation of a state economy, is definitely noteworthy in comparison with the development of other early states of this region of Africa.

Notes

[1]This is connected with the fact than Akan traditions are created and preserved by akyeame who are members of 'courts' connected with particular stools of different rank.

[2]Rømer 1965:2.

[3]Curtin 1977, Davis 1978.

[4]Atkinson 1982:358.

[5]Bowdich 1819:321.

[6]Wilks 1975:75-76.

[7]Sahlins 1975, Dickson 1965.

GLOSSARY OF FREQUENTLY USED AKAN TERMS

abusua (pl. mmusua) - matrilinear clan.

Adae - festival connected with offering sacrifices to the ancestors, takes place twice in the Akan month (43 days): Akwasidae is celebrated on Saturdays and Awukudae on Wednesdays.

adonten - the main force of the army.

akoa (pl. nkoa) - subject. The term has a wide range of meaning and depending on the situation or context it might mean either a slave or a free subject.

akura (pl. nkura) - village.

Akwamuhene - (1) the ruler of Akwamu. (2) a military official, second in rank to the Kontire.

ankobea - the ruler's personal guard.

asafohene (pl. nsafohene) - a term generally used for military commanders in European accounts translated as "captain".

asafo - military organization.

Asantehene - the title of the ruler of Ashanti.

batafo - merchant organization of the Ashanti.

benkum - the left wing of the army.

birempon (pl. biremponfo) - literally 'great master', title used by chiefs. According to Rattray it applies particularly to subservient chiefs.

dwa - stool.

fekuo - literally 'group of people'. An institution meant to serve special military or police purposes, sometimes civillian ones (for instance batafo). Noteworthy is its connection with slave-recruitment.

gyase - the palace personel, the ruler's court.

hene (correctly ohene, pl. ahene) - ruler, commander, chief, head.

kontire hene (correctly kontihene, krontihene) - the most important military commander, commander of an army.

nifa - the right wing of the army.

ntoro - patrilinear kinship.

odehye (pl. adehye) - one of the closest matrilinear relatives of the ruler who could theoretically be his successors.

odekuro - the head of the akura.

Odwira - annual festival in celebration of the yam harvest.

okyeame (pl. akyeame) - traditionalist, a court office.

oman (pl. aman) - traditional political unit, state.

omanhene (pl. amanhene) - ruler of the oman.

panin (pl. mpaninfo) - literally 'elder', the term may apply to age or to a position of supremacy.

sana - bag of weights, treasury.

Sika Dwa - the Gold Throne of the Ashanti.

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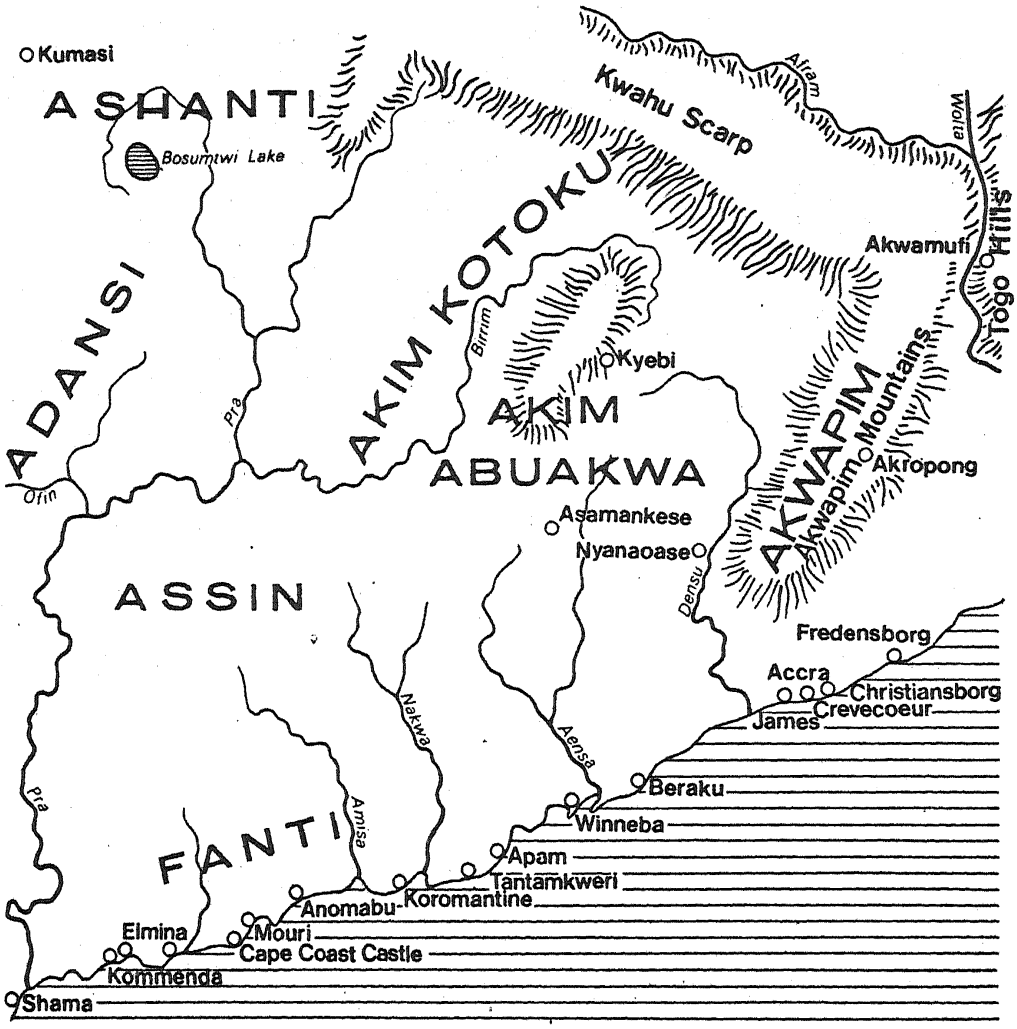
Map 1

The distribution of the main population groups of the eastern part of the Gold Coast in the first half of the 18th century